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ABSTRACT

This training manual presents "Connecting to Success" (CTS), a program designed to expand through technology the mentoring, career development, and improved academic achievement opportunities for youth with disabilities. The manual begins by defining electronic mentoring as a way to connect adult employees with students through the Internet. It discusses the barriers to leading productive lives that youth with disabilities face and the benefits of e-mentoring. Following sections discuss: (1) e-mentoring program development; (2) youth development and the core skills and competencies that youth development programs should promote at different ages; (3) specific challenges faced by students with learning disabilities, mental health disorders, and mental retardation; (4) the roles and responsibilities of the program coordinator/community liaison; (5) the roles and responsibilities of the employer-liaison; (6) the roles and responsibilities of the teacher; (7) the roles and responsibilities of the mentor; (8) the roles and responsibilities of those being mentored; (9) launching a CTS program site; and (10) program evaluation to assess the process of implementing the CTS e-mentoring project and to determine the program's impact on students with disabilities. The manual closes by describing the pilot project partners. Worksheets and model forms are also included along with a list of resources. (Contains 24 references.) (CR)

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Connecting to Success

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Mentoring Through Technology to Promote Student Achievement

Training Manual

The College of Education & Human Development
University of Minnesota

Developed by the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, Institute on Community Integration (UCEDD)

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MENTORING THROUGH TECHNOLOGY
TO PROMOTE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Training Manual

FEBRUARY 2003

DEVELOPED AND PUBLISHED BY:

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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

FOR ADDITIONAL INFO ON CONNECTING TO SUCCESS CONTACT:
HTTP://ICI.UMN.EDU/EMENTORING
TEL: 612.624.2097
EMENTORING@ICIMAIL.COLED.UMN.EDU

FOR ADDITIONAL COPIES OR ALTERNATE FORMATS CONTACT THE
PUBLICATIONS OFFICE, INSTITUTE ON COMMUNITY INTEGRATION,
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA 612.624.4512
PUBLICATIONS@ICIMAIL.COLED.UMN.EDU
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What You Need to Know Before Beginning...

What Connecting to Success Is

Connecting to Success is an innovative model for mentoring that connects young people with disabilities to caring adults in the community. In this model, the primary communication between mentor and mentee is through email with occasional face-to-face meetings incorporated into the program.

Developed by the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET) at the University of Minnesota, Connecting to Success (CTS) is designed to bring together participants and resources from schools, government, community organizations, and businesses to make a connection to the world of work for the involved youth. The goal of CTS is to help youth develop social competence, academic motivation, career awareness, and improved reading and writing skills.

The CTS Web Site Is http: //ici.umn.edu/ementoring

Why This Manual Was Developed

NCSET and CTS partners have seen the benefits and opportunities that have come to young people participating in mentoring programs. We are aware that programs like these for youth with disabilities often take a special understanding of underlying issues and that these issues are not always considered by traditional mentoring programs.

CTS has been test piloted and evaluated in two states and preliminary results have shown promise for participating youth, educators, and businesses. Based on this preliminary work, we feel that CTS is ready to be replicated in other locations with the support of NCSET staff.

The CTS program manual is intended to be the primary resource for site operators, providing information and assistance for the successful implementation of a program site. This manual also provides background information and research features that are useful when seeking program funding.

The CTS program manual can also be used to:

- Help integrate youth with disabilities into established mentoring programs.
- Assist in the development of a quality e-mentoring program.
- Formulate strategies for schools and youth organizations to initate or strengthen partnerships with local businesses.

If a school or youth organization wishes to affiliate and become a CTS program site, additional technical assistance is available from NCSET staff by phone, email, or in person. Since its inception, our staff has worked with affiliated organizations to develop funding, secure technology resources, recruit partner organizations, train participants, and perform program evaluations. We know that initiating a program is complicated and we want to help in any way we can.

How to Affiliate

How to Become a Connecting to Success Site

Although the training materials in this manual can be used by various organizations to implement e-mentoring, in order to be a CTS site a formal relationship between the site and NCSET must be established. Use of the CTS logo and name are prohibited unless there is such a formal agreement in writing.

There are substantial benefits to establishing this formal commitment and becoming an affiliate. These include:

- Professional training on the model by NCSET staff and others who have had success in implementing and expanding the CTS model.
- Ongoing telephone consultation and support by NCSET staff.
- Site visits by NCSET staff and other CTS trainers to assist in implementation, expansion, and evaluation.
- Partnership in a nationally recognized, effective e-mentoring program.
- Support in seeking funding to support your CTS site.
- Links with other CTS sites around the country, to share strategies and best practices.
- Participation in the research effort gathering information on the impact of e-mentoring on the transition outcomes for youth with disabilities.

CTS Site Categories

- A **pre-operational** site is one in the planning stages that does not currently serve youth; a plan, including timeframe, must be developed to include serving students within the next year.

- A **developing** site is serving students, but may not be operating for a full year, or is operating on a limited basis.
- A **fully developed** site offers the CTS program to young people for the entire academic year.
- An **expanding** site is seeking to build upon its successes and create more CTS sites within the state or local areas.

All sites should affiliate with the national CTS program, whether they are in the pre-operational, developing, fully developed, or expanding phase of programming.

Standards for CTS Sites

Affiliation is a simple process by which localities or states join a national network of CTS sites that are committed to providing mentoring opportunities for youth with disabilities through email. Member sites must also adhere to a set of standards:

- There must be a formal agreement with NCSET.
- There must be an identified lead partner to establish the relationships necessary for success – business, education, youth serving organization, and community relationships.
- There must be identification and allocation of resources necessary (in-kind, human, technology, and financial) to implement the program.
- There must be a commitment of business partner(s) and of the youth serving organization (including schools) to support the implementation.
- There must be a commitment to follow the basic CTS model, including screening and safety standards, face-to-face meetings, the use of an intermediary, and a focus on employment-related skills.

To begin the affiliation process, contact:

Mary Mack, Associate Director,
National Center on Secondary Education and Transition
University of Minnesota
6 Pattee Hall, 150 Pillsbury Drive SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455
612-624-7579 mackx012@umn.edu

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Thank you to all the organizations who gave us permission to adapt their materials for use in this manual. We would particularly like to thank Achieve!Minneapolis for their generosity in sharing their model and materials.

Connecting to Success

Mentoring Through Technology to Promote Student Achievement

"I look at my involvement in the e-mentoring program
as a greater definition of my success
than anything I've done in the business arena."
—Employer Liaison

"It's cool to have someone else to ask questions
to and get their opinion on different things.
It's also neat to have someone to give you advice...
who probably had more experience than me."
—Student

"Students who got regular emails felt more in tune with school.
It was one time per week when kids felt listened
to and heard. There was a relationship between
getting a message from an e-mentor and having a good day.
The support mentors provide students is invaluable."
—Teacher

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Section 1

INTRODUCTION

MISSION

The mission of Connecting to Success is to significantly expand mentoring, career development and improved academic achievement opportunities for youth with disabilities through technology.

VISION

We envision students with disabilities across the country looking forward to learning at school, developing social competence through mentoring relationships with caring adults, and developing plans for their careers.

We see schools forming dynamic, interactive partnerships with employers, using their combined strengths to develop creative solutions to educational and workforce problems.

We see mentors in communities throughout the country immersed in sharing their gifts, experiences, humor, encouragement, and career knowledge while their mentees awaken to new possibilities in their lives.

We see employers and community members learning more about the capabilities of youth with disabilities while youth gain the skills and confidence to strive with determination toward their highest goals.

PURPOSE OF CONNECTING TO SUCCESS

The purpose of Connecting to Success is to develop, implement, and evaluate an exemplary e-mentoring model that will promote the successful transition of youth with disabilities.

The goals of the program are:

For Youth

- Connecting youth to positive role models in the world of work who understand their special needs.
- Building motivation for academic learning.
- Enhancing self-esteem.
- Improving students' skills in writing, computers, social interaction, and career readiness.
- Integrating e-mentoring with achievement of transition/IEP goals.
- Providing expanded opportunities to help youth with disabilities become successful adults.

For Employers

- Helping employers develop a better understanding of the skills and abilities of youth with disabilities.
- Improving employee morale by offering them an opportunity to mentor a young person with a disability.
- Improving business, community, and school relations.

What is a Mentor?

The word ***mentor*** is traced back to Greek mythology when Odysseus had to go to war and asked Mentor to guide and look out for his son Telemachus in his absence. Although the word has Greek origins, most cultures have had and cherished the equivalent of what we now refer to as mentors. Most recently, the America's Promise initiative led by General Colin Powell and now by former senator Harris Wofford identifies five promises that all youth in our society should be entitled to, and one of those five is a caring mentor.

Webster's dictionary defines mentor as a wise, loyal adviser, a teacher or coach. Other words used to describe mentors are guide, advocate, and sharer of resources.

Perhaps you can think of a mentor or mentors in your own life and what that has added to your life. Mentors are gifts in our lives. By what they share with us and how they treat us, we are far more apt to fulfill our potential and develop our character and capabilities. This age of technology has now added a new way for mentors to communicate and that is electronically–thus e-mentoring.

The following quotes from three different middle school students illustrate the different ways in which students have been impacted by their e-mentors:

"Being able to communicate with someone
encouraged me to go for my dreams."

"She wrote me a poem then I wrote her one.
She encouraged me to stay in school.
She said I would have a hard life if I didn't.
It can even be hard if you go to school.
She made me realize that
I really do want to make something of my life."

"He helped me with assignments that I could not do.
I want to be an accountant and he is one."

Definition of E-Mentoring

Mentoring is an age-old concept and email is a modern communication tool. When combined, they create a brand new way to connect caring adults with young people: e-mentoring!

In traditional mentoring, an adult role model develops a one-to-one relationship with a youth to provide support, encouragement, and guidance. Electronic mentoring is a modification of this model using email to connect adult employees with students through the Internet.

E-mentoring offers a realistic way for busy adults and busy youth to build meaningful relationships. Because it is so convenient, many employees volunteer to become mentors. Teachers find e-mentoring an effective tool to link student learning to the world of work and to motivate students.

Good planning makes e-mentoring successful. This guide is meant to help you make decisions and identify tasks to consider when building your program.

Background

Making the Case

Youth with disabilities still face many barriers to leading productive lives. They are disproportionately represented in the major categories that define youth "at-risk." For example,

- 36 percent of youth with disabilities drop out of high school,
- more than 50 percent of all adjudicated youth are young people with learning disabilities and behavioral disorders,
- the majority of youth with disabilities come from situations of family poverty, and...

- over half of all chemically dependent youth have been or are actively on IEPs and receiving special education and related services.

Numerous post-school studies of former special education students have documented that young people with disabilities, as a group, have the highest unemployment rates, lowest participation in post-secondary training programs, and the highest likelihood of remaining dependent on various public assistance programs.

Likewise, among the general youth population, we find that many lack positive connections with adults who motivate them to achieve and are available to "show them the ropes." Employers are concerned that too many young people lack preparation for the today's workplace and the skills and attitudes to lead productive adult lives.

Mentoring Research

One of the most promising approaches to supporting youth with disabilities to achieve more meaningful and positive post-school outcomes is mentoring. There is solid evidence that effective mentoring programs can change the direction of a youth's life, reduce substance abuse, and improve academic performance (Grossman, 1999).

Mentoring has been shown to offer the following benefits for mentees (Wighton, 1993):

- emotional support.
- increased motivation.
- help in identifying and locating needed resources.
- acquisition of knowledge, problem solving and other needed skills.
- orientation to systems information such as employment systems.

The Commonwealth Fund's survey (McLearn, Colasanto, & Schoen, 1998), a nationwide study of mentoring programs, reported the following results:

- 62% of students improved their self-esteem.
- 52% of students skipped less school.
- 48% of students improved their grades.
- 49% of students got into less trouble in school.
- 47% of students got into less trouble out of school.
- 45% of students reduced their substance abuse.
- 35% of students improved family relationships.

A New Focus for E-Mentoring: Connecting to Success

Connecting to Success was designed to harness what has been learned about e-mentoring with knowledge of the transition process to post-secondary success. It is among the first e-mentoring efforts to focus on youth with disabilities in transition expanding their opportunities to experience the benefits of a work related mentor. This innovative project is designed to create opportunities for career learning, improved self-esteem, and high expectations for the future for at-risk students and students with disabilities.

The project draws from the expertise of the **National Center on Secondary Education and Transition** (NCSET) at the **University of Minnesota's Institute on Community Integration** (ICI). NCSET staff are using their knowledge in the field of transition to create an e-mentoring model that supports the transition process of youth with disabilities. Previously, the staff of NCSET have actively worked with all states and U.S. territories to promote an improved transition system for youth with disabilities, the full participation of youth with disabilities in state and local school-to-work systems, and other initiatives to support improved adult outcomes. A wide range of technical assistance, training, and information development and dissemination strategies have been used to support state and local agencies in these efforts. NCSET staff are applying related expertise to the development of this e-mentoring model.

Achieve!Minneapolis (formerly Minneapolis Youth Trust) is assisting by sharing expertise and experience in e-mentoring. The state of Iowa, through the Iowa Paths Systems Change Project, and Minnesota, in coordination with the Minnesota Transition Team, were the pilot sites involving four local school systems (two rural and two urban) and approximately 100 students. Transition students, resource teachers and employer-partners pioneered the use of e-mentoring as a part of the transition process.

By enhancing students' awareness of the world of work, their perceptions of their own capabilities, and their ability to communicate effectively, we seek to increase the likelihood that at-risk students and students with disabilities will pursue post-secondary education. We also seek to change perceptions so that students, educators, employers, and citizens will not only envision youth with disabilities transitioning to productive lives, they will expect it.

Section 2

E-Mentoring Program Development

Key Players

Program Coordinator/Community Liaison

The coordinator oversees the entire training process and provides training to other key players within the project. This person serves as a liaison between the school, the employer, and the community partners. The coordinator calls a meeting of the key players from the school, the business, and the community to:

- Identify the roles and responsibilities of each key player.
- Decide on local goals and objectives within the scope of Connecting to Success goals and objectives.
- Plan the training.

Ideally, the coordinator is located at an intermediary organization such as the state department of education, the governor's office, or a non-profit working with schools and businesses. They act as a third party facilitator between the school and the business.

Employer Liaison

The employer liaison coordinates project activities at the employment site and participates in the recruiting, training, and matching mentors with students. This person may be a human resources coordinator, a community outreach coordinator or someone assigned to oversee the project activities within the company. Ideally, this person or another representative from the employment site may make an initial visit to the classroom to talk with students about the business (during mentee recruiting).

Teacher or School Liaison

The teacher is integrally involved in the project from start to finish. The teacher should be invited to the initial meeting of key players and should be trained by the coordinator. The teacher then participates in mentor training and conducts mentee training. The teacher teams with the employer-liaison to create matches. Some sites

have chosen to have a lead teacher or lead counselor who helps to facilitate the program at the local site.

E-Mentor

An e-mentor is an employee with the employer-partner who volunteers to participate in e-mentoring with one student during one academic school year. The e-mentor is someone who has a desire to contribute to the success of a young person and does so by offering friendship, acceptance, and academic support. An e-mentor participates in orientation and training events and corresponds with the teacher and employer-liaison about mentoring issues. An e-mentor follows the parameters of the Connecting to Success project, which are somewhat different than that of traditional mentoring programs.

Mentee

A mentee is a student who seeks to improve academic skills and work related skills by corresponding with an e-mentor via email for one school year. A mentee completes mentee training and makes a point of sending weekly emails as well as answering emails from mentors.

Community Partners

Community partners are people who work at community agencies, and can play a role in training and other aspects of the project. They can be involved in mentor training, the structured face-to-face events, and they can play a role in connecting the e-mentoring activities with transition planning. The community partners should be persons involved in helping youth transition from school into adult life, including members of IEP teams. Some examples of potential community partners are: a member from the WIA Youth Council, a vocational rehabilitation counselor, a person from the local government employment service, a representative from a post-secondary school, a community leader. These resource people may serve as an informal or formal component of your program.

Overview of the E-Mentoring Process

The Basic Model

- One student (mentee) is matched with one adult employee (mentor).
- Both make a commitment to participate for one school year.
- The student and the mentor exchange weekly emails sent to business or school addresses.
- Teachers provide specific assignments that direct email communications.
- The teacher monitors outgoing and incoming emails.

- One to three (students and mentors) face-to-face meetings take place in a supervised setting toward the beginning, the middle and the end of the year and help to provide a personal connection.
- Respects and follows the rules regarding confidentiality, boundaries and reporting.
- Focuses on the goals and outcomes for the project (school and employer expectations).
- The final face-to-face meeting is a celebration.
- Participates in a program evaluation.

Two Essential Elements

- Student and mentor have access to appropriate technology to send weekly emails. This technology must be available at the school and the work sites as the model is not designed for students or mentors to use home/personal email addresses.
- Committed school and corporate partners implement and manage the program. In addition to senior management and school administrative support, partnering organizations each need a person to champion and coordinate the program.

Key Steps for the Overall Process

- Identify partners and coordinators.
- Assess email access of students and mentors.
- Plan how the model works for partners:
  - Define objectives.
  - Set policies and procedures.
  - Develop curriculum.
- Recruit and train mentors.
- Train teachers.
- Train students.
- Match mentors and students.
- Monitor, support and troubleshoot.
- Host face-to-face meeting events.
- Evaluate and celebrate.

10 Key Steps to the Mentor Process

1. Interested employees complete Mentor Application.
2. Employer-Liaison contacts employees about Mentor Training.
3. Potential mentors attend initial orientation/training.
4. Potential mentors complete initial training on critical issues of e-mentoring.
5. Mentors receive an email informing them that the program will start when they receive their first email from the mentee.
6. Mentors receive via listserv weekly notices from the teacher about the lesson for the week and how they can facilitate the student's progress.
7. Each mentee sends an email to the mentor based on the weekly lesson. The mentor replies.
8. Mentors receive an invitation to participate in an initial, supervised, face-to-face meeting with students. This should occur early in the school year. A second meeting may occur mid year with a final meeting toward the end of the school year.
9. Further mentor training will take place during the year until all training components have been covered.
10. Mentors receive periodic updates from the teacher through the listserv regarding school schedules, mentee absences, and progress of students.

Suggested Timeline for Establishing a New Program

These are suggested planning steps and a timeline for establishing school-year e-mentoring program. You can be up and running more quickly, but don't overlook key decisions and tasks in planning and evaluation.

Spring/Summer

- Identify partners.
- Identify coordinator and contacts from each partner organization.
- Assess technology capability for students and mentors.
- Plan your program model and create a timeline for implementing it:
  - Define objectives.
  - Set policies and procedures.
  - Develop curriculum.

Fall

- Identify the student group.
- Recruit mentors.
- Orient and train mentors.
- Orient and train students.
- Complete a parent permission form.
- Match mentors with students.
- Begin email exchange.

Winter

- Monitor, support and troubleshoot.

Spring

- Evaluate.
- Celebrate with face-to-face meeting event.
- Revise program as needed and expand.

Determining Computer Readiness

Before starting an e-mentoring program, the local program coordinator and/or teacher should conduct an informal assessment of computer access, availability, and reliability:

- How many computers are available to students in the program?
- Do systems often go down?
- What computer problems will you need to remedy before starting an e-mentoring program?
- Is there a technical support person within the school system? If so, can that person's assistance be enlisted?

Suggestions

- If computers are limited, have students write their emails longhand, and alternate entering messages into the computers.
- Explore sources of support in the community, including employers, who may be willing to assist with purchase of computers or upgrades to the school's computer system.

Online Communication

Communicating online is not the same as face-to-face verbal communication. Thinking through the differences and learning some strategies for online communication can help with development of electronic mentoring relationships.

What Works

In general, the following elements have been found to facilitate successful e-mentoring exchanges (Harris, 1996):

- Personal, one on one, assistance for students.
- Communicating regularly.
- Students are able to use the communication to initiate and explore topics of interest to them.
- Balanced communication that is both curriculum-based and personal.

Additional Communication Considerations

Establish a Listserv

Establish a listserv for teachers to communicate with mentors. The effectiveness of the teacher in maintaining communication through the listserv is critical to the success of the program.

Ongoing Communication

The teacher and employer-liaison should encourage communication from mentors on a regular basis. Mentor concerns should be brought to the teacher and, if necessary, the employer-liaison.

Clarity About Change in Schedules

Mentors and the employer-liaison should keep the teacher informed about any absences, work travel or times when the mentor will be unable to email.

Teachers should act as online facilitators, informing mentors of special school schedules, absences and anything else that may be interfering with regular communication.

Saving a Copy

A copy of all communication should be saved in a format that is convenient. Mentors may want to create an electronic file through an email program, or print out hard copies. It may be necessary to look back on what was said earlier, for clarification purposes, or simply to see the progress. Either way, a copy should be saved.

Closure

Closure is an important part of any relationship. In this context, it is important for the well-being of the student involved. In the final email, mentors should remind the students and themselves why the project was undertaken to begin with, and retrace the accomplishments. Mentors may want to reminisce about any funny or memorable moments during the past year. The mentor should acknowledge the student's efforts in keeping up communication, or if results were mixed, simply encourage the student by praising what she or he did well. The mentor should search her or his own feelings, and say good-bye to the student in a way that is caring and appropriate to the mentoring relationship. If the mentor and mentee wish to continue the relationship, they can explore working together the next school year through the same program or applying to the Big Brothers/Big Sisters Program to become mentor and mentee under their guidelines and background checks.

Section 3

Youth Development

Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement.
Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.
—Helen Keller

Problem prevention and treatment focus on the elimination
of negative youth outcomes or problems.
Promoting youth development has a much different focus:
the development of skills and competencies
that youth will need to succeed as adults.
—Contract with America's Youth:
Toward a National Youth Development Agenda (p. 3, 1995)

The American Youth Policy Forum

Over several decades, America's youth policies focused predominately on prevention. Grants were given to reach "troubled," "alienated," "difficult," "resistant," or "at-risk" youth. Such labels, perhaps unknowingly, placed the blame for adolescent problems on youth themselves. People created programs to prevent drug use, teen pregnancy, gang membership, school drop-out, and anti-social behavior. Such terminology and programming reflected what has been called a "problem-centered" or "deficit" approach to youth.

Although we became very good at identifying what can go wrong for youth, we neglected studying what healthy development looked like. We knew much more about "anti-social" behavior than we did about "pro-social" behavior. We knew what we wanted to prevent, but not what we wanted to promote.

Defining Positive Youth Development

What do youth require to become healthy, productive, compassionate adults? Professor Emma Werner has provided one set of answers by following the developmental progress of a group of Hawaiian children over several decades. In studying

children growing up in challenging conditions, she discovered that certain youth succeeded in spite of their circumstances *(Vulnerable but Invincible: A Longitudinal Study of Resilient Children and Youth,* 1982). They were resilient.

How did these children achieve this? In summing up what has been learned about resilient youth, Bonnie Benard (1991) provides the following profile:

- They are socially competent (i.e. the qualities of responsiveness, flexibility, empathy, caring, a sense of humor, communicative, and other prosocial behavior).
- They are good problem-solvers (i.e. the ability to think abstractly, reflectively, and flexibly, and to be able to attempt alternate solutions to problems).
- They are autonomous (i.e. a strong sense of independence or sense of power; an ability to separate themselves from a dysfunctional family environment).

What supported the development of these qualities were three factors in their environment:

- Caring and support (i.e. most resilient youth have had the opportunity to establish a close bond with at least one adult).
- High expectations (i.e. people have held high expectations for their behavior and achievement).
- Opportunities for participation (i.e. youth are given active roles to contribute to community life).

Search Institute in Minneapolis, Minnesota, has identified a set of 40 internal and external assets that increase the healthy development and well-being of adolescents. The internal assets are the competencies, commitment to learning, values, and sense of positive identity the young person has internalized. The external assets are the support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations as well as opportunities for constructive use of time provided by family, communities and schools. The more assets a young person possesses the less likely she will engage in high-risk behaviors. One of the focuses of positive youth development initiatives is to work with families, schools, and communities in promoting positive programs and opportunities that can help build assets in our youth. It is a reminder that we need to be united in our understanding of what encourages positive youth development and it can not be left up to one sector of society. We are all responsible. (A list of the assets can be found in the References and Resources section of this manual.)

The Need for Positive Youth Development Programs

We need to offer adolescents opportunities to fulfill developmental needs in the physical, intellectual, psychological, social, and moral and ethical areas. They benefit from experiential learning, need to belong to a group while maintaining their individuality, and want adult support and interest. They also need opportunities to express opinions, challenge adult assumptions, develop the ability to make appropriate choices, and learn and use new skills.

When young people are not given positive outlets for growth, they may find potentially damaging alternatives. Gang membership, for example, may address adolescent needs for belonging and membership in a group, development of close friendships, and opportunities for exercising decision-making skills and responsibility. Involvement in gangs, however, also places young people at high risk for drug use and exposure to violence and crime. In contrast, positive developmental opportunities meet adolescent needs while decreasing their exposure to destructive influences and reducing their involvement in risky behaviors.

Moreover, a rapidly changing society and a decreasing sense of community have reduced opportunities for many young people to receive the support necessary to move to self-sufficiency. Programs with a youth development focus offer young people the skills and knowledge they will need to function effectively as adults in an increasingly competitive world.

In every youth services agency across the country, there exists the opportunity for leadership, both within the organization and the broader community. Young people have long been touted as this nation's most valuable resource. Today, youth services professionals must exercise the leadership necessary to ensure that communities match those words with action. This involves recognizing that being problem free is not the same as being fully prepared. Effective programs will involve young people's skills and talents, build on their strengths and involve them in planning and decision making.

"The Need for Positive Youth Development Programs" contains information that was adapted and reprinted with permission from:

National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth: *Reconnecting Youth and Community: A Youth Development Approach.* Retrieved February 27, 2002 from http://ncfy.com/reconnec.htm

What is a Youth Development Approach?

What are the central ideas behind youth development programs? Here are seven key aspects.

Age-Specific

Youth development is age-specific. It assumes that there are certain growth-related tasks that adolescents must complete to develop into mature adults. [*Youth Development: On the Path Toward Professionalization*, Hahn, Raley; National Assembly, 1999]

A Process

Youth development is the process through which adolescents actively seek, and are assisted, to meet their basic needs and build their individual assets or competencies. [*A Matter of Time*, Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992]

Multidimensional

Youth development is multidimensional, embracing: (1) a process of human growth and development; (2) a philosophical orientation to social development and community; and (3) a programmatic frame work for youth services. [*A Model of Youth Work Orientations*, Edginton & deOlivera, Humanics, pp. 3–7, Spring 1995]

Purposeful

Youth development means purposefully seeking to meet youth needs and build youth competencies relevant to enabling them to become successful adults. Rather than seeing young people as problems, this positive development approach views them instead as resources and builds on their strengths and capabilities to develop within their own community. To succeed youth must acquire adequate attitudes, behaviors, and skills. [*Building Resiliency*, pp. 11–14, National Assembly, 1994; and Position Statement on Accountability and Evaluation in Youth Development Organizations, p. 1, National Collaboration for Youth, 1996]

The Prevention of Undesirable Behaviors

Healthy youth development strives to help young people develop the inner resources and skills they need to cope with pressures that might lead them into unhealthy and antisocial behaviors. It aims to promote and prevent, not to treat or remediate. Prevention of undesirable behaviors is one outcome of healthy youth development, but there are others: the production of self-reliant, self-confident adults who can take their place as responsible members of society. [*A Matter of Time*, Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992]

A Framework

Youth development is defined as the ongoing process in which all young people are engaged and invested. Through youth development, young people attempt to meet their basic personal and social needs and to build competencies necessary for successful adolescent and adult life. It is framework, that focuses on their capacities, strengths, and developmental needs.

Critical to Survival

All young people have basic needs that are critical to survival and healthy development. They include a sense of safety and structure; belonging and membership; self-worth and an ability to contribute; independence and control over one's life; closeness and several good relationships; and competency and mastery. At the same time, to succeed as adults, all youth must acquire positive attitudes and appropriate behaviors and skills in five areas: health; personal/social; knowledge, reasoning and creativity; vocation; and citizenship. [***Making the Case: Community Foundations and Youth Development***, Bonnie Politz, Senior Program Officer, Academy for Educational Development, Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, Foundations for Change, 1996, Second Edition]

"What is a Youth Development Approach?" contains information that was adapted and reprinted with permission from:

National Youth Development Information Center (n.d.). ***Definitions of youth development (and related terms)***. Retrieved September 11, 2000 from: http://www.nydic.org/devdef.html.

What Youth Development Programs Must Provide

What are these core skills and competencies that positive youth development programs should foster? The YMCA of the USA identified seven developmental areas of needs shared by every young adolescents (and their characteristics) in 1998 that include:

Competence and Achievement

Characteristics include: desire for personal recognition desire for responsibility, desire to succeed, emergence of new interests and capabilities, emerging racial/cultural identity, emerging sexual identity, "imaginary audience," self-consciousness, need for approval from adults, need for approval from peers, somewhat shaky self-esteem, and vulnerability to adult expectations.

Self-Definition

Characteristics include: emerging gender identity, emerging racial/cultural identity, emerging sense of a personal future emotionalism, mood swings, new body image, new reactions from others, onset of formal operations.

Physical Activity

Characteristics include: changing hormone levels produce periods of boundless energy and lethargy desire to test new physical capabilities normal variation in onset of puberty, rate of growth vulnerability to injury due to rapid growth.

Creative Expression

Characteristics include: desire to test new physical and mental capabilities, emerging racial/cultural identity, emerging sexual identity, onset of formal operations.

Positive Social Interaction with Peers

Characteristics include: continued importance of parents and other adults, "imaginary audience," self-consciousness, increasing importance of peers, maturing social skills, need for approval from adults, need for approval from peers, search for models, heroes, and heroines.

Experience Structure and Clear Limits

Characteristics include: authoritarianism, desire for autonomy, desire to know and understand rules and limits, increasing importance of peers, lack of life experience, need for continued adult guidance, need for security, onset of formal operations, "personal fable," perceived immunity to harm.

Meaningful Participation

Characteristics include: desire for autonomy, desire to be part of the "real" adult world, desire for personal recognition, desire for responsibility, emerging gender identity, emerging racial/cultural identity, lack of life experience, maturing social skills, onset of formal operations, readiness to make commitments to ideals, activities, and people.

"What a Youth Development Program Must Provide" contains information that was adapted and reprinted with permission from:

National Youth Development Information Center (n.d.). *Definitions of Youth Development (and related terms.)* Retrieved September 11, 2000 from: http://nydic.org/devdef.html

What is Important at this Time in your Mentee's Life?

The development of the mentee will vary both by age and personal growth. This section discusses the common physical, cognitive (thinking), social, and emotional characteristics for each teenage group. As you read, keep in mind that no two children develop according to the same schedule. In addition, transitions are gradual.

Young Teen—Age 12 to 14

This is a time of great developmental variety among peers.

Physical Growth

Girls may return this year as young women. Some boys of 13 may still be the size of an 11-year-old, while other boys of the same age may have grown six inches. The growth spurt that marks beginning adolescence may occur across a wide range of ages, with girls maturing before boys.

Rapid changes in physical appearance may make new teens uncomfortable with their changing body images. Hands and feet grow first, creating a problem with clumsiness. Acne, voice changes, and unpredictable menstrual cycles all set up situations of great embarrassment. At the same time, slower developing teens may be uneasy about the lack of changes. But even without the outside physical changes of adolescence, social growth, changes in thinking, and emotional development may be occurring.

Growth in Thinking

Young teens enjoy playing with ideas as much as sports. Young teens move from concrete to more abstract thinking during this time. They still tend to think in all-or-nothing terms, however. If a subject is of interest, it will be intensely explored. Ready-made solutions from adults often are rejected in favor of the young teens finding solutions on their own. Leaders who can provide supervision without interference can have a great influence on these young teens. If an adult leader is respected, his or her opinion will be highly valued by young teens.

Small groups provide an opportunity for young teens to test ideas. Young teens can be very self-conscious, and a smaller group usually is less intimidating. Small clubs with many positions for developing leadership are ideal for this age. As they start to deal with abstract ideas and values, justice and equality become important issues for the early teens.

Social Growth

In the process of moving away from dependence on parents toward eventual independence, early teens enjoy participating in activities away from home. Dependence on the opinions of parents or other adults shifts to dependence on the opinions of peers. By late adolescence, independence will emerge. Young teens no longer are

afraid to be away from their parents and are beginning to develop mature friendship skills. Parents may need help in understanding that this is a healthy sign of growing maturity, not a rejection of past family activities.

Groups and clubs provide an opportunity for the early teens to feel social acceptance. Rather than the adult recognition sought earlier, young teens now seek peer recognition.

Providing members with the opportunity to learn to feel at ease with members of the opposite sex is an important function of group social activities. For most activities, boys still will cluster with boys and girls with girls, although they will begin to be very interested in what the other group is doing. Opportunities are needed for boys and girls to mix without feeling uncomfortable.

Emotional Growth

As puberty approaches, young people's emotions begin the roller coaster ride that will characterize them throughout adolescence. Changes in hormones contribute to the mood swings, as do changes in thinking. The early teen years are a time for beginning to test values. Spending time with adults who are accepting and willing to talk about values and morals has a lasting effect on young people.

This period seems to present the biggest challenge to a young person's self- concept. So many changes occur-everything from entering a new school to developing a new and unfamiliar body-that young people hardly know who they are. This is a time for adults to help with self-knowledge and self-discovering activities.

It still is important to avoid comparing young people with each other; instead, a young person's present performance should be compared with his past accomplishments. Be especially careful at this age not to embarrass the young person. Teens feel the need to be part of something important. An activity that provides good things for others and demonstrates the teen's growing sense of responsibility is ideal.

Middle Teens–Age 15 to 17

The middle teen years are a peak time for leadership but also a time of possible declining interest in past activities as jobs, school, and dating compete for the teen's time and energy.

Physical Growth

By the middle teen years, body changes have been accepted by most young people. The awkwardness has been overcome in most cases, although some boys still will be growing at a fast pace. Gone is the early teen, who was adjusting to the seemingly ever-changing size and shape of the adolescent body. Most teens of this age know their own abilities and talents. Many perfect athletic talent during intense

hours of training and competition. New skills, such as driving a car, serve to move teens further away from the family and into the community as independent people.

Growth in Thinking

Adolescents are beginning to be able to think about the future and make realistic plans. Because they are mastering abstract thinking, they can imagine things that never were in a way that challenges-and sometimes threatens-many adults. They still have difficulty understanding compromise, however, and may label adult efforts to cope with the inconsistencies of life as "hypocrisy."

As middle teens think about the future, tomorrow's vocational goal influences today's activities. The middle teen years are a time of exploration and preparation for future careers. The teens set goals based on feelings of personal need and priorities. Any goals set by others are apt to be rejected. College visits, part-time jobs, field trips to factories and businesses, and conversations with college students and adults working in a wide variety of fields can assist teens with making education and career decisions.

The middle years of adolescence are a time when teens can initiate and carry out their own tasks without supervision. Advanced divisions of projects, requiring research and creativity, give teens the opportunity to demonstrate to themselves and others how much they have learned and how much they can accomplish on their own.

Social Growth

At this stage adolescents would be capable of understanding much of what other people fee-if they were not so wrapped up in themselves. Relationship skills are usually well-developed, however, and friendships formed at this stage are often sincere, close, and long-lasting. Recreation continues to move away from the family and now additionally away from the large group. Dating increases. Among most teens, group dates gradually give way to double dates and couples-only dates.

Other activities, such as sports and clubs, are still important. Teens want to belong to the group, but now want to be recognized as unique individuals within that group. Teens' individually set priorities will determine how active they remain in past organizations. Leader/member relations should now change from that of director/follower to that of advisor/independent worker. Adults need to understand the many changes occurring in the teens' lives. Consistent treatment from adults is important even though the teens act like adults one day and like children the next.

Emotional Growth

Two important emotional goals of the middle teen years are independence and identity, although neither will be achieved completely during this time period.

Factors in these goals include achieving a satisfactory adjustment to sexuality and definition of career goals. Middle teens are learning to cooperate with others on an adult level. Time is precious. If programs are filled with "busy work" or meaningless activities, teens soon will lose patience and interest.

The task of learning to interact with [people to whom they are attracted] may preoccupy teens. Unsettled emotions may cause the teen to be stormy or withdrawn at times. In general, though, the teens will pride themselves on increased ability to be responsible in the eyes of themselves, peers, and adults.

Older Teens/Young Adults–Age 18 and 19

These young adults are moving on to college, jobs, marriage, and other adult responsibilities.

Physical Growth

Growth for almost all young adults has tapered off. Late teens are no longer as preoccupied with body image and body changes. In most ways they have adult bodies, although they may not be prepared entirely for adulthood.

Growth in Thinking

Future plans are important to teens making the transition to adult life. Goals they set for the future influence which activities the teens continue.

Late teens can determine their own schedules. Only general directions are needed when they are assigned familiar tasks.

Social Growth

Close relationships develop as young people become preoccupied with their need for intimacy. Some will marry at this age. Part-time jobs or advanced schooling may fill the need for social relationships.

As teens make and carry out serious decisions, the support and guidance of adults still are needed. The final decisions are made by the teens, of course, but adults can act as resource persons. They can stimulate teens' thoughts.

Emotional Growth

Late teens feel they have reached the stage of full maturity and expect to be treated as such.

"What is Important at This Time in Your Mentee's Life?" contains information that was adapted and reprinted with permission from:

Karns, J. and Myers-Wall, J. (n.d.) *Ages and stages of child and youth development: A guide for 4-H leaders.* Retrieved November 1, 2000 from: http://www.agcom.purdue.edu/AgCom/Pubs/NCR/NCR-292.html

What Youth Development Programs Do

Prepare Young People

Youth development programs prepare young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a structured, progressive series of activities and experiences, which help them to obtain social, emotional, ethical, physical, and cognitive competencies. They address the broader developmental assets all children and youth need (such as caring relationships, safe places and activities, health and mental health, marketable skills, and opportunities for service and civic participation), in contrast to deficit-based approaches which focus solely on youth problems. Youth development programs help youth deal successfully with the challenges of adolescence and prepare them for the independence and responsibilities of being parents, workers, and citizens, by attempting to help youth develop "competencies."

Mobilize Communities

Rather than only seeking to stop young people from engaging in risky behaviors, positive youth development, in addition, aims to mobilize communities to create positive goals and outcomes for all youth. It recognizes that being problem-free is not the same as being fully prepared. Effective programs are youth centered: staff and activities engage young people's diverse talents, skills, and interest, building on their strengths and involving them in planning and decision-making. They are also knowledge centered: building a range of life skills, activities show youth that "learning" is a reason to be involved, whether in sports, clubs, arts, or community service, and provide opportunities to connect with a wide array of adult and peer mentors.

Offer Care

Youth development programs are also care-centered. They provide family-like environments where youth can feel safe and build trusting relationships. Specific needs in these areas are influenced by current development (physical, cognitive and social), as well as individual characteristics and a broad set of background and contextual factors. Developmental needs are met within a social context and are influenced by the demands and supports provided by those contexts, such as the family, school, and community.

Offer Nonacademic, Participatory Activities

These programs also conduct activities with a primarily nonacademic focus; employ primarily active and experiential learning methods; and promote the competencies through group and one-to-one activities, which may include activities in youth clubs, sports and recreation, peer counseling and teaching, mentoring, arts, values education, leadership development, crime and delinquency prevention, youth employment as part of an educational program, community service or volunteerism, literacy, after school programs, career counseling, job skills training, drug abuse prevention, alcohol education, parenting skills activities, ethnic or cultural enrichment, tutoring, and academic enrichment.

What is Required for Organizations to Adopt a Youth Development Approach?

- Becoming knowledgeable about the challenges and benefits of moving toward a youth development approach.
- Helping policymakers, practitioners, and community members value youth as cultural and economic resources.
- Accepting that youth input is not youth involvement or empowerment
- Focusing on systemic changes in youth policy.
- Becoming flexible in thinking about new strategies and applying existing resources in new ways.
- Partnering with other youth agencies to design new ways to solicit funding, provide services, and develop and promote improved policies for young people.
- Viewing youth, families, and communities as partners in change, working toward common goals.
- Reengineering or reinventing, rather than simply reorganizing, the business of youth work.

"What Youth Development Programs Do," contains information that was adapted and reprinted with permission from:

National Youth Development Information Center, (n.d.). ***Definitions of youth development (and related terms).*** Retrieved September 11, 2000 from: http://www.nydic.org/devdef.html.

"What is Required for Organizations to Adopt a Youth Development Approach?" contains information that was adapted and reprinted with permission from:

National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth. (1996). ***Reconnecting youth and community: A youth development approach.*** Retrieved February 27, 2002 from: http://www.ncfy.com/reconnec.htm#1.

Leadership in Youth Development Programs

Leadership is one of the key ingredients to a successful youth development program. Remember that leadership and management are very different roles within an organization. A leader also may manage and managers may lead in certain situations. The two functions, however, are different:

Managers...

- Provide a structure for carrying out that mission.
- Control workflow and focus on details.
- Handle day-to-day operations.

Management is a critical function and necessary as support to leadership. Management, however, is not leadership. Leadership requires the capacity to set a course toward a goal and then draw others along the same path through persuasion, influence, and power. Leadership is the ability not only to convince others of the potency of a particular vision, but to draw on their talents, skills, and energy in making that vision a reality.

Leaders...

- Provide a vision or sense of mission.
- Offer inspiration and motivate people toward loftier goals.
- Focus on the big picture and long-term growth of the organization.

Leadership and vision are key elements of implementing the youth development approach. The youth development philosophy is more a vision for young people than an actual approach. Developing a framework for translating that vision into practice at the local level requires a commitment by organizational leaders to assess their own capacity to lead and the organization's capacity to work collaboratively with the community. Both dynamics are necessary for translating youth development policy into practice.

In many ways, the basic tenets of leadership and the youth development approach are analogous. Both require analysis that is based on sound principles and that recognizes that problems and achievements do not occur in isolation; they are interrelated. Most importantly, both leadership and the youth development approach are based on the fundamental premise that change does not occur simply through the provision of assistance. Real and lasting change occurs through the involvement of youth and adults in proactively rebuilding their communities.

Without principled leadership, today's social problems likely will not be resolved.

Great Leaders

The old paradigms of social services systems may be in question, but not the long-revered characteristics of great leaders:

Leadership requires courage.
Most truly challenging situations demand not only imaginative solutions, but also the tenacity to carry them out.

Leadership is not easy, although the results of true leadership make future efforts easier over time.

Leadership requires the ability to listen, as well as an openness to, and respect for, diversity and difference of opinion.

Leadership can feel demanding and isolating,
but results in a sense of belonging and community.

Leadership requires the ability to put aside personal bias or desires in decision-making.

Leadership is the ability to make decisions,
live with the consequences, accept the blame, share the credit,
and learn from the experience.

Most importantly, true leadership ensures organizational or community growth. Leadership provides vision and direction; it does not seek to control. When leaders are strong and confident, they empower others to think creatively and they are open to trying new ideas.

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National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth. (1996). ***Reconnecting youth and community: A youth development approach.*** Retrieved February 27, 2002, from: http://www.ncfy.com/reconnec.htm#1

Section 4

What About Disabilities?

Individuals with disabilities are not a homogenous group. There is no one size fits all. Many myths exist concerning disabilities and the extent to which a person with a disability may need accommodations or modifications to succeed in the workplace. The persistence of negative and erroneous stereotypes and attitudinal barriers continues to be one of the most difficult barriers to overcome when insuring the full inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the fabric of our society.

People with disabilities are like everyone else, and the only way to truly understand their skills and abilities is by getting to know them and encouraging them to articulate what they need and your role in meeting those needs. Young people with disabilities need to learn how to engage in this type of dialogue in order to succeed in school, work and community life. The skills that they develop in terms of articulating their needs are called self-determination skills.

Many students with disabilities learn behaviors that discourage them from maximizing their capabilities. Students with disabilities, who comprise a large portion of the "at risk" population, tend to be more susceptible than their peers to:

- low expectations for self.
- expecting others to do what they can do for themselves.
- coping strategies that place responsibility with the system (school) rather than with the person (student).

THIS DOES NOT HAVE TO BE THE CASE!

To take charge of their lives and develop a positive self-image, youth need to:

- Be emotionally accepted where they are at as a starting point for growth (this is where the friendship of a mentor can be very helpful).
- Be challenged to move beyond their current skill level by someone who cares and yet can see the youth's greater potential and encourage its pursuit.

- Build on strengths, including academic, personal, creative and social skills and talents.
- Ask for what they need and want in a specific, concrete way.
- Tell others what accommodations they may need in order to succeed.

Learning Disability Information

What is a Learning Disability?

A learning disability is a disorder that affects people's ability to either interpret what they see or hear or to link information from different parts of the brain. These limitations can show up in many ways: as specific difficulties with spoken and written language, coordination, self control, or attention. Such difficulties extend to school work and can impede learning to read, write, or do math.

Contrary to a popular misconception, learning disabilities are not a sign of low intelligence. Some extremely intelligent persons have learning disabilities.

Types of Learning Disabilities?

Learning disability is a broad term that covers a pool of possible causes, symptoms, treatments, and outcomes. Because of this it is difficult to diagnose or to pinpoint the causes. Learning disabilities can be divided up into three broad categories. These types of learning disabilities include:

- Developmental speech and language disorders.
- Academic skill disorders.
- "Other," a catch-all that includes certain coordination disorders and learning handicaps not covered by the other terms.

Each one of these categories includes a number of more specific disorders.

Causes of Learning Disabilities?

No one knows what causes learning disabilities as of now. There are too many possibilities to pin down the cause of the disability with certainty. A leading theory among scientists is that learning disabilities stem from subtle disturbances in the brain structures and functions. It is more important, however, that families not dwell on the causes but rather move forward in finding out how their child learns and how to get the right support.

Academic Skills Disorders

Students with academic skills disorders are often years behind their classmates in developing reading, writing, or arithmetic skills. The diagnoses in this category include:

- Developmental reading disorder.
- Developmental writing disorder.
- Developmental arithmetic disorder.

Developmental Reading Disorder

This type of disorder, also know as dyslexia, is quite widespread. In fact, reading disabilities affect 2 – 8 % of elementary school children.

When you think of what is involved in the "three Rs"– reading, 'riting, 'rithmetic – it's astounding that most of us do learn them. Considering that to read, you must simultaneously:

- Focus attention on the printed marks and control eye movements across the page.
- Recognize the sounds associated with letters.
- Understand words and grammar.
- Build ideas and images.
- Compare new ideas to what you already know.
- Store ideas in memory.

A person can have problems in any of the tasks involved in reading. However, scientists found that a significant number of people with dyslexia share an inability to distinguish or separate the sounds in spoken words. Some children have problems sounding out words, while others have trouble with rhyming games, such as rhyming "cat" with "bat." Yet, scientists have found these skills fundamental to learning to read. Fortunately, remedial reading specialists have developed techniques that can help many children with dyslexia acquire these skills. However, there is more to reading than recognizing words. If the brain is unable to form images or relate new ideas to those stored in memory, the reader can't understand or remember the new concepts. So other types of reading disabilities can appear in the upper grades when the focus of reading shifts from word identification to comprehension.

Developmental Writing Disorder

Writing too, involves several brain areas and functions. The brain networks for vocabulary, grammar, hand movement, and memory must all be in good working order. So, a developmental writing disorder may result from problems in any of these areas. For example, a child with a writing disability, particularly an expressive language disorder, might be unable to compose complete, grammatical sentences.

Developmental Arithmetic Disorder

Arithmetic involves recognizing numbers and symbols, memorizing facts, aligning numbers, and understanding abstract concepts like place value and fractions. Any of these may be difficult for children with developmental arithmetic disorders, also called dyscalculia. Problems with numbers or basic concepts are likely to show up early. Disabilities that appear in the later grades are more often tied to problems in reasoning.

Many aspects of speaking, listening, reading, writing, and arithmetic overlap and build on the same brain capabilities. So, it's not surprising that people can be diagnosed as having more than one area of learning disability. For example, the ability to understand language underlies learning to speak. Therefore, any disorder than hinders the ability to understand language will also interfere with the development of speech, which in turn hinders learning to read and write. A single gap in the brain's operation can disrupt many types of activity.

Other Learning Differences

There are also other categories, such as "motor skills disorders" and "specific developmental disorders not otherwise specified." These diagnoses include delays in acquiring language, academic, and motor skills that can affect the ability to learn, but do not meet the criteria for a specific learning disability. Also included are coordination disorders that can lead to poor penmanship, as well as certain spelling and memory disorder.

"Learning Disability Information" contains information that was adapted and reprinted with permission from:

National Institutes of Mental Health (n.d.). *Learning Disabilities.* Retrieved February 27, 2002 from http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/ldmenu.cfm

Mental Health Disorders

Identifying a mental health challenge can be difficult, especially if it is a secondary disability or a response to another primary diagnosis, such as a learning disability or ADD/ADHD. Youth who are experiencing depression, anxiety, or other mental health issues may become truant and avoid school. Some may need psychiatric medication and therapy. Others may need additional emotional or psychological support to understand the disability.

Depressive Disorders

Students with depression often have multiple symptoms including a depressed mood or irritability, difficulty with enjoyment of normally pleasurable activities, lack of appetite or over eating, difficulty sleeping at night or wanting to sleep during the daytime, tiredness and low energy, physical slowness or agitation, low self esteem, difficulty concentrating, and recurrent thoughts of death or suicide.

Attention Deficit Disorder/with Hyperactivity (ADD/ADHD)

ADD/ADHD is a neurobiological disability that is characterized by impulsivity, difficulty with focusing and attention span, and in some instances, hyperactivity. Some of the characteristics include:

- Fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes.
- Has difficulty sustaining attention.
- Does not appear to listen.
- Struggles to follow through on instruction.
- Has difficulty with organization.
- Avoids or dislikes tasks that require sustained mental effort.
- Is easily distracted.
- Is forgetful in daily activities.
- Squirms or fidgets.
- Talks excessively.
- Difficulty with waiting their turn.

The important factor to consider when supporting youth with ADD/ADHD is that often these children and youth are at risk for school failure, jobs loss and emotional difficulties resulting from this failure. A person can have ADD/ADHD in addition to other diagnosis. Some youth with mental retardation also have ADD/ADHD, some have a learning disability, depression or other. There are medications that are available, physical and psychological therapies, and behavior modification strategies that can build internal skills. Those that work with youth

with ADD/ADHD can support these strategies as well as build confidence and competence.

Anxiety Disorder

There are a number of anxiety disorders that can affect children and adolescents and interfere with their school work, as well as leading to school refusal or truancy. Students with anxiety may have social anxiety including anxiety about speaking in front of the class. Students who have been traumatized may have post-traumatic anxiety symptoms which interfere with their ability to function in school. Some children and adolescents are extremely avoidant and shy. Some children and adolescents are extremely perfectionistic and compulsive and may also have compulsive behaviors. Some children and adolescents have significant separation anxiety, frequently worrying about harm befalling themselves or caregivers when they are not together with their parents. Some children and adolescents have significant phobias. Some are frequently overanxious, worrying about their competence, future events, etc.

Conduct Disorders

Examples of these behaviors would include stealing, running away from home, verbal threats, challenges to authority, fire setting, breaking and entering, deliberate destruction of property, cruelty to animals, forcing others into sexual activity, using weapons, initiating physical fights, physical cruelty to people, and of course, truancy.

"Attention Deficit Disorder/with Hyperactivity (ADD/ADHD)" contains information that was adapted and reprinted with permission from:

Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (2001). *CHADD Facts.* Retrieved March 4, 2002 from http://www.chadd.org/facts/add_facts01.htm.

Mental Retardation

The definition of ***mental retardation*** has changed over the years. Researchers today are looking at still another definition that includes not just the disability determination factors but also the impact of society's response to the terminology.

The definition from The Arc (2002) states that an individual is considered to have mental retardation based on the following three criteria: intellectual functioning level with an I.Q. of 70 (in some states 75) or below; significant limitations in two or more adaptive skill areas; and the condition is present from childhood (before age 18). Adaptive skill areas are those daily living skills needed to live, work and play in the community. They include communication, self-care, home living, social skills, leisure, health and safety, self direction, functioning academics (reading, writing, and math), community involvement and work.

The shift being considered for the future definition of mental retardation looks beyond an I.Q. and adaptive behavior to include the interaction with the attitudes and opportunities within our communities. The first of these is a change in the conception of mental retardation from a trait within the individual to an expression of the interaction between the person with limited intellectual and adaptive skills and that individual's environment. The second element is an emphasis on the pattern of the person's needs rather than the deficits (Schalock, et. Al., 1994).

No matter what the definition it is imperative that those who support youth and adults with mental retardation understand that there is a wide variation in skill, interest, needs and dreams for persons with mental retardation and that the term itself has removed many career and life opportunities for youth who want to be successful in their schools, communities and work environments, and they can.

"Mental Retardation" contains information that was adapted and reprinted with permission from:
The Arc (n.d.). ***Introduction to mental retardation***. Retrieved March 4, 2002 from:
http://www.thearc.org/faqs/mrqa.html.

Adapations, Accomodations, and Assistive Technology

For many disabilities, there are existing accommodations that can be made to assist the individual in performing the essential functions of the task at hand. Many of these accommodations have been integrated into daily American life. For example, curb cuts on sidewalks or ramps to enter buildings, so that an individual in a wheelchair is able to move about without impediment. Many other accommodations are made on an individual basis, to help a specific person achieve a specific task.

Meaningful access for people with disabilities encompasses four environments: physical, informational, programmatic/policy, and attitudinal.

Physical Environment: Elements of this environment are most often though of when discussing disability-related access. Curb cuts, ramps, and elevators are some of the more visible additions to physical environments since the implementation of accessibility laws. Additionally, raised print and Braille signage in elevators and outside offices, along with visual alarms, are adaptations to the physical environment which make it more accessible to people with sensory disabilities (eg: blind/visually impaired and deaf/hard of hearing).

Informational Environment: This environment encompasses print materials (e.g.: posters, flyers, agendas, newspapers), oral communications (e.g. speakers, films, and performances), and information technologies (e.g. telephones, interactive kiosks, and World Wide Web pages). Access to the informational environment can occur through the creation of printed materials in alternative formats (Braille, large print, audio tape, and electronic), the provision of sign language interpreters for public speeches and performances, and the incorporation of design elements in information technology systems that are friendly to adaptive technology.

Programmatic/Policy Environment: This environment involves maximizing participation opportunities for all through the design of accessible programs. It also includes the development of policies which eliminate barriers to programs, such as adapting eligibility requirements, establishing equal opportunity policies that include the protection of people with disabilities, and the designation of a key person to be accountable for disability-related access.

Attitudinal Environment: This environment is the most intangible of the four, primarily because it involves human behavior and perception. Attitudinal barriers include the prevailing negative assumptions perpetuated by society about people with disabilities; such as the portrayal of disabled people as helpless victims or "inspirational." Changes in the attitudinal environment typically take place through one-to-one interaction with people with disabilities.

"Adaptions, Accomodations, and Assistive Technology" contains information that was adapted and reprinted with permission from:

University of Minnesota Disability Services (1998). ***Accessing student life: Steps to improve the campus climate for disabled students.*** Minneapolis MN: Author. (Reprinted from: Accessing Student Life: Steps to Improve the Campus Climate for Disabled Students. University of Minnesota Disability Services, Office of the Associate Vice President for Multicultural Affairs, 1998, University of Minnesota. Engage: Disability Access to Student Life)

Disclosure of Disability-Related Information

What should teachers tell mentors and employers about students' disabilities?

The amount of information disclosed to mentors about students' disabilities is an issue that should be handled with care. We recommend that teachers consider each case individually. Consider what would be best for each student. Be sensitive to students' rights to privacy.

Teachers should meet with mentors prior to the start of email exchanges and give the mentors some basic information about the class and its students. This may include a general statement about the severity of disabilities among students, the kinds of problems students struggle with, the degree of difficulty with learning, writing skills levels, behavioral considerations. Also, mentors should be given a fact sheet including basic information about some of the more common disabilities. If mentors need further information they can find resources on the Connecting to Success website, or a teacher may refer them to additional resources.

Important considerations regarding disclosure of disability-related information:

- Parental consent should be obtained prior to the release of any information related to a disability.
- Students may be at various stages in adjusting to a disability. A student may not be ready to discuss a disability publicly. On the other hand, some students may be very open about their disability. Students should be given the option of keeping disability-related information private if that is their choice.
- If releasing some disability-related information appears appropriate, release only information that helps the mentor do his or her job. This will probably be a very limited bit of information.
- Within some communities, stigmas exist concerning disabilities. It may be more healthy in some cases not to disclose specific disability-related information if you believe it would hurt the student's standing in the community.
- In some cases, having functional information about the student's disability could be useful to the mentor in developing realistic expectations and compassion concerning the student's situation.

Section 5

COORDINATORS

PROGRAM COORDINATOR/COMMUNITY LIAISON

The coordinator oversees the entire training process and provides training to other key players within the project. This person serves as a liaison between the school, the employer, and the community partners. The coordinator calls a meeting of the key players from the school, the business, and the community to:

- Identify the roles and responsibilities of each key player.
- Decide on local goals and objectives within the scope of Connecting to Success goals and objectives.
- Plan the training.

The coordinator is located at an intermediary organization such as the state department of education, the governor's office, or a non-profit working with schools and businesses. They act as a third party facilitator and convener.

The following section is intended to help clarify and define the roles and responsibilities of the program coordinator/community liaison at a Connecting to Success site.

COORDINATOR JOB DESCRIPTION

Responsibilities

- Provide leadership for your Connecting to Success program.
- Recruit and convene key stakeholders and facilitate planning for the program.
- Assure that all participants are adequately trained prior to starting email exchanges.
- Require participants to comply with Connecting to Success parameters concerning limitations of the mentoring relationship, boundaries, monitoring, and reporting.

- Attend school- or employer-sponsored face-to-face meetings.
- Oversee all local training activities.
- Provide ongoing support to teachers, employer-liaisons, mentors and community-liaisons.
- Monitor the program through telephone calls and visits at least monthly (but weekly during the first month) to assure its success.
- Participate in evaluation of the program.
- Hold high expectations for all participants, including students with disabilities.
- Model promptness, reliability and dependability.
- Inspire teachers, mentors and students to strive for high standards.
- Be open to different perspectives on life, including those of diverse cultures.

Benefits

- Make a difference in the lives of young people in your community.
- Enhance your community's educational system and future workforce.
- Become acquainted with other people who strive toward similar goals.
- Increase your understanding of the issues at-risk youth face.
- Increase your knowledge of diverse groups of people.

Desired Skills and Coordinator Attitudes

- A sincere interest in the well-being of all youth.
- Leadership skills.
- Ability to convene community leaders.
- Planning skills.
- Ability to convey a positive vision for the future of the community's youth.
- Basic technical knowledge of email.
- Familiarity with the community's educational system.
- Willingness to learn about disability-related issues.

Responsibilities of Coordinator

A Coordinator convenes key players to discuss roles and responsibilities:

1. An employer-liaison is identified who will be the point-of-contact at the employer site.
2. The school, the employer, and all key players agree to uphold certain standards in the best interest of students. All key players will be trained in the aspects of the program germane to their role. All mentors will receive both orientation and training prior to communicating with students, including training on critical issues. The teacher will oversee quality control and will handle issues concerning boundaries and confidentiality.
3. Those in attendance agree on the means of communication. This could include a listserv, telephone consultation, and/or face-to-face meetings.
4. Those in attendance identify approximate timelines for rollout of the program.
5. Those in attendance develop a plan for communication and future meetings. It is recommended that this include follow-up during the first week of the project, and then communication/meetings at key junctures within the project.

B The coordinator is integrally involved and responsible for mentor training. The coordinator oversees the activities of those who assist with this training, such as employer-partners, teachers, and community-liaisons and student speakers. The coordinator also oversees all other training components within the project.

C The coordinator contacts key players to determine how the project is going and whether there are unforeseen needs or issues. This should include contact during the first week of mentoring, and then two weeks later, and then on at least a monthly basis.

D Coordinator assists with planning for structured face-to-face events either at the school or employment site, one to three times per year (This depends on the preferences of the site).

E The coordinator gathers data for evaluation of the pilot project.

Timeline Checklist for Coordinators

Note: this is a sample timeline for implementation. Use it as a guide to design one that is appropriate for your program.

- ❑ Create an advisory or steering committee.
- ❑ Recruit schools and employers.
- ❑ Plan and design the program goals and implementation with advisory team.
- ❑ Design mentor training (orientation meeting and training meetings).
- ❑ Design teacher training.
- ❑ Design mentee training.
- ❑ Determine technology needs.
- ❑ Finalize recruitment materials.
- ❑ Recruit mentors.
- ❑ Schedule orientation session for mentees.
- ❑ Schedule orientation session for mentors.
- ❑ Screen mentors.
- ❑ Select final mentors.
- ❑ Train teachers.
- ❑ Train mentors.
- ❑ Train mentees.
- ❑ Match mentors and mentees.
- ❑ Schedule ongoing support/training meetings for mentors.
- ❑ Schedule group activities with mentors and mentees.
- ❑ Schedule parent involvement activities.
- ❑ Provide for ongoing evaluation.

Employer Recruiting

- Establish networks within the community and generate interest.
- Connect with an employer and gain information about her/his needs.
    - If beneficial, ask a business leader to make the first contact.
    - Use contacts made through your network.
- Market your program to the employer.
    - Emphasize benefits.
        - Build workforce of the future.
        - Reduce training costs to prepare new employees for the workplace.
        - Community involvement.
    - Communicate about the training, preparation and screening of student participants.
    - Tell employers about supports available within the program.

Cultivating and maintaining the employer-partner relationships:

- Maintain Communication.
    - Do not use jargon: Speak in a common language.
    - Make communication convenient.
- Give recognition.
    - At school events.
    - Press releases.
    - Community events.
    - Give the employer a periodic progress report.

Mentor Recruiting

The employer contacts employees to recruit, using an approach that is appropriate to the company culture. This could involve group meetings, newsletters, personal contacts, letters or emails. Correspondence includes:

- The importance of mentoring.
- Information about how the program will help students with disabilities.
- Age range of students and types or range of disabilities.
- The fact that relevant training will be provided.
- Information as to whether the project will take place during work hours.
- An inquiry about whether the person is willing to work with a student with a disability.
- An inquiry as to whether the person has experience/expertise related to empowerment issues (A statement will be included to the effect that volunteers will not be screened out if they have not had experience–training will be provided).

Suggested Minimum Criteria:

- Interest.
- Commitment of 1 school year.
- 3-7 hours of initial orientation and training.
- 30-45 minutes per week online.
- 2-3 face-to-face meetings per year with students.
- Willingness to adhere to the goals and boundaries of the program.

Procedures:

Create an application form for potential mentors. Ideally, this can be a computerized form that can be sent and retrieved electronically. Paper forms will also work.

The employer sends an initial inquiry out to employees inquiring as to whether they would be interested in the mentoring project (See Sample Mentor Recruiting Memo).

The employer sends the application form out to those who expressed interest (See Suggestions for Second Mentor Recruiting Memo and Suggestions for Content of Application Form).

Mentor Training

We mentors get a real value out of this program and it is a relatively easy way to volunteer. – E-Mentor

Mentor orientation and training are important prior to corresponding with students. Mentors need to understand the program's objectives, what's expected of them, and where they can go for help and support. Mentors must also understand policies and procedures, background on the school and students, and other information specific to your program.

Some of this orientation and training can be delivered electronically by email or on a web page. However, at least one group orientation/training meeting is recommended. Involve teachers and school representatives in the training. It's an opportunity for all partners to meet mentors and answer specific questions. It also demonstrates that this is a partnership effort. The agenda (see sample agenda on next page) will vary based on what has been communicated previously.

At a minimum, mentor training should include:

- Program overview.
- Specific program objectives and how mentors help accomplish them.
- Policies, procedures and guidelines.
- Expectations of mentors.
- Orientation to the school and students (including a description of the school(s) and the demographics).
- Tips on mentoring youth.
- Specific curriculum or technical training that mentors need to help their students complete assignments.

Sample Agenda

A Opening and welcome.

1 An overview of e-mentoring.

2 The rationale: youth development.

B E-Mentoring: The employer's perspective – presented by employer-liaison or other employer representative.

1 Why participate? The employer's perspective.

2 Overview of process (attachment).

3 Policies and Expectations.

4 Role of e-mentor.

C E-Mentoring: The school's perspective – presented by the teacher or other school representative.

1 Why participate?

2 Overview of mentees.

3 Expectations of the school (in addition to expectations above).

D Transition – presented by student trainers and/or community-partners.

1 Students share their stories about their transition plans and career plans.

2 Students talk about the need for high expectations and a supportive environment that challenges them to use their abilities to the fullest.

E Boundaries.

1 Confidentiality.

2 Reporting.

3 More about role of e-mentor and boundaries.

4 Liability Issues.

F Sample Lessons: sample scenarios relating to boundaries (this would be a matter of simply distributing materials).

G Technical support and communication.

1 Monitoring of emails.

2 Listserv.

3 How to handle problems.

a Listserv.

b Emailing the teacher.

c Coordinator hosts periodic meetings with mentors.

d Coordinator visits mentors at employment site.

H Review and conclusion.

I Evaluation of training.

Student Speakers

In keeping with a youth development philosophy, we recommend that students who have been successful in their transition processes assist with the training of mentors. When a program is just starting students can speak specifically to their own transition process. After a pilot year of the project, students can also help to address the actual e-mentoring relationship.

Student speakers should be prepared to share with other trainees:

- Experiences in developing plans for future success.
- Barriers overcome during that process.
- What was helpful or not helpful about various services, programs or relationships in the past.
- Past experiences with mentors.
- How the student has developed, or is developing, self-reliance.
- The process of learning to ask for specific assistance when needed and communicate clearly about the kind of help that is needed.
- Effective strategies for working with both a mentee and a mentor.
- Personal benefits and insights received from having been a mentee.

Teacher Training

I just wanted to let you know that this program is impacting the students in a wonderful and positive way. Thanks for taking the time to give the kids a dream and a friend. – Teacher

Teachers are integral to the e-mentoring program's success. They must be excited about e-mentoring's potential to help them achieve goals for their students. The program is a tool rather than an added responsibility.

Therefore a well developed teacher training/orientation is essential.

Teachers bring expertise in curriculum development to the partnership. They can use that skills to create exciting applied activities for using e-mentoring as an instructional tool. Time to develop quality curriculum pieces is important.

Suggested Elements:

- Background of the program and the importance of mentoring.
- Goals and outcomes.
- Key players/partners in the model.
- Overview of e-mentoring process –teacher assessment of students and technology.
- Mentee recruiting – Parental consent.
- Matching students and mentors.
- Mentee training.
- Monitoring emails.
- Boundaries.

- Lesson planning.
- Bi-weekly communication between teacher-mentor.
- Providing support to mentors and mentees.
- Supports available to teachers.
- When possible hearing from other teachers, students and mentors who have participated in an e-mentoring programs.

Mentee/Student Training

Student orientation and training is important to prepare students for their e-mentor and to be sure of their basic skills in e-mentoring technology. Before the first email are sent, students should know how to address and send an email. They also should be familiar with the program's goals and objectives and where they can go for help if something is not working in their e-mentoring relationship. They must know the boundaries of the program with a particular emphasis on the emails being limited to school and work computers and the face-to-face meetings occurring at the school or the mentor's place of work as a whole program gathering.

Student training should include:

- Understanding of the role of an e-mentor.
- Orientation to the program goals and objectives.
- Instruction in keyboarding and emailing.
- Boundaries and guidelines.
- Orientation to the mentor's place of employment.
- Orientation and expectations of the curriculum assignments.
- Expectations of students.
- Practice in asking and answering questions and interviewing skills.

Management Tools

As volunteers sign on to become mentors, organize the information on a spreadsheet. A spreadsheet with mentor, student and coordinator names, email addresses and other pertinent information is a suggested management tool. A spreadsheet listing information about mentor-student matches, teachers, and coordinators can easily be updated and shared among program coordinators.

The business coordinator should start the spreadsheet by listing mentor names and email addresses. The spreadsheet is then sent to the school coordinator or teacher, who then matches students with mentors. Once matches are made, students send the first email to the mentor and the regular exchange of correspondence begins.

Each coordinator should establish a group address list in her/his computer address book that contains the addresses of all the mentors and coordinators. This lets coordinators send broadcast messages to all mentors on the transmission.

Management Spreadsheet

Create a spreadsheet including:

- Mentor name and email address.
- Mentee name and email address.
- Coordinator name and email address.
- Teacher name and email address.
- Other pertinent information.

Group Email Addresses (nicknames)

Within email programs, use the address or mail management features to create nicknames or address book entries that include all mentor and/or coordinator email addresses under one nickname. Create more nicknames as needed.

With each nickname or address book entry, you have the ability to send one message to all the email addresses linked to a particular nickname or address book entry.

Sample nickname or address book entry:

Name entered in your email address book:	Company E-Mentors
Email addresses associated with that name:	bjones@company.com
	janderson@company.com

Face-to-Face Meetings

E-mentoring allows people to communicate regularly and with a certain convenience. However, another important part of the program are the face-to-face meetings. These typically occur twice or three times during the year. We have found that the first meeting should occur within the early weeks of the program preferably after two or three emails. The initial emails break the ice and begin to establish a relationship. Students then become very interested in meeting this invisible correspondent. It is helpful for the first gathering to take place at the mentor's worksite. This give students a workplace experience and provides a good job shadowing opportunity. The event needs to be well planned and organized, not open ended.

Suggested Agenda Items for First Face-to-Face Meeting

- Mentors and mentees are introduced using an effective process to identify one another.
- A structured getting to know one another activity.
- A tour of the workplace.
- Mentor and mentee spend 10 minutes at the mentor's worksite.
- Return to the large gathering area.
- Structured activity that processes the tour and the mentor's worksite.
- Closing.

Confidentiality, Boundaries, Monitoring, and Reporting

One important element of the Connecting to Success model is its careful consideration of youth needs, including the needs of youth with disabilities. While all youth need clear boundaries and consistent behavior from caring adults, these qualities are even more essential for at-risk youth who may have experienced inconsistency in their past relationships with adults. Some youth may not have learned how to establish and maintain appropriate boundaries. By modeling these skills, mentors teach youth this important skill. With this in mind, Connecting to Success emphasizes the following essential components: clear relationship boundaries, confidentiality, monitoring and reporting.

Boundaries

Connecting to Success is a school-based program. All activities take place either at the school or at the employer site, and are supervised by school or program staff. The primary activity is exchange of emails. There may also be occasional supervised, face-to-face meetings in a group setting.

If personal contact is wanted, a mentor may arrange to visit the student at the school during regular, supervised school activities. These clear boundaries are meant to protect both the mentor and mentee and to create a program structure that prevents misunderstanding and unrealistic expectations. Violating these boundaries my lead to harm to either the mentee or mentor. Traditional mentoring programs include thorough mentor screening including a background check. If a mentor and mentee want to expand their relationship beyond the parameters of Connecting to Success they should contact Big Brother/Big Sister or a comparable mentoring organization to facilitate screening, training and structuring of a more comprehensive mentoring relationship.

Confidentiality

Parental consent should be obtained for a student's participation in the e-mentoring program. Also, the confidentiality of disability-related information should be respected. Information may be disclosed as needed to mentors, but only with parental and student consent.

Monitoring

All emails should be read by a teacher or teacher's assistant to assure that the content is appropriate within the scope of Connecting to Success. For example, discussion of personal issues is appropriate; however, requesting money is not. In addition, if an email indicates that the mentor or mentee are violating the boundaries of the program, the teacher should promptly address the issue, offering a reminder regarding the boundaries and reasons for the boundaries. The following are examples of some boundary violations and inappropriate communications that may appear in an email:

- A request to borrow something.
- An invitation to an outing, a movie or social event.
- Use of personal email address rather than company or school email address.
- A request for contact outside the program parameters.
- Rude, vulgar or disrespectful statements.

Reporting

Other issues that could be revealed through emails are that of child-abuse, child-neglect, or threat of harm to self or others. If an email suggests the existence of such a situation, the teacher is considered the mandatory reporter. That is, the teacher is required to assess whether the incident is reportable and to report it to the proper authorities if appropriate. Mentors should relay information about any concerns about abuse, neglect or threat of harm to the teacher and allow the teacher to assess the situation. There may be exceptions in which a mentor or teacher should use their best judgment and act in consideration of the safety and welfare of those concerned.

Section 6

EMPLOYER-LIAISON

The employer-liaison is the person who coordinates project activities at the employment site and participates in the recruiting, training and matching mentors with students. This person may be a human resources coordinator, a community outreach coordinator or someone assigned to oversee the project activities within the company. Ideally, this person or another representative from the employment site may make an initial visit to the classroom to talk with students about the business (during mentee recruiting).

The following section is intended to help clarify and define the roles and responsibilities of the employer-liaison at a Connecting to Success site.

EMPLOYER-LIAISON JOB DESCRIPTION

Responsibilities

- Oversee the employer's participation in the program providing leadership for Connecting to Success at your business location.
- Participate in recruiting of mentors and training of mentors.
- Oversees the application process with potential mentors screening for those who would be good role models for youth and have nothing in their personnel files to indicate otherwise and the recommendation of their supervisors.
- Handle employer-related technical and computer issues.
- Participate in training.
- Require participants to comply with Connecting to Success parameters concerning limitations of the mentoring relationship, boundaries, monitoring, and reporting.
- Attend school- or employer-sponsored face-to-face meeting.
- Attend planning meetings convened by the program coordinator.
- Provide ongoing support to mentors.

- Monitor the program through periodic conversations with mentors. Report any problems to the teacher.
- Participate in evaluation of the program.
- Model promptness, reliability and dependability.
- Inspire mentors and students to strive for high standards.
- Hold high expectations for all participants, including students with disabilities.
- Be open to different perspectives on life, including those of diverse cultures.

Benefits

- Make a difference in the lives of young people in your community.
- Enhance your community's educational system and future workforce.
- Become acquainted with other people who strive toward similar goals.
- Provide leadership within your workplace.
- Increase your understanding of the issues at-risk youth face.
- Increase your knowledge of diverse groups of people.

Desired Skills and Mentor Attitudes

- A sincere interest in the well-being of all youth.
- Leadership skills.
- Planning skills.
- Ability to convey a positive vision for the future of the community's youth.
- Basic technical knowledge of email.
- Familiarity with the community's educational system.
- Willingness to learn about disability-related issues.
- Understanding of communication processes at the employer site.

Mentor Recruiting

The employer contacts employees to recruit, using an approach that is appropriate to the company culture. This could involve group meetings, newsletters, personal contacts, letters or emails. Correspondence includes:

- The importance of mentoring.
- Information about how the program will help students with disabilities.
- Age range of students and types or range of disabilities.
- The fact that relevant training will be provided.
- Information as to whether the project will take place during work hours.

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Suggested Minimum Criteria:

- Interest.
- Commitment of 1 school year.
- 3–7 hours of initial orientation and training.
- 30–45 minutes per week online.
- 2–3 face-to-face meetings per year with students.
- Willingness to adhere to the goals and boundaries of the program.

Procedures:

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Suggested Agenda Items for First Face-to-Face Meeting

- Mentors and mentees are introduced using an effective process to identify one another.
- A structured getting to know one another activity.
- A tour of the workplace.
- Mentor and mentee spend 10 minutes at the mentor's worksite.
- Return to the large gathering area.
- Structured activity that processes the tour and the mentor's worksite.
- Closing.

Confidentiality and Matching

Confidentiality

The employer-liaison has special opportunities and responsibilities to protect the confidentiality of students and any personal information that is exchanged during the program. As the person most often in contact with mentors, the employer-liaison should guide and advise mentors concerning confidentiality. Only information pertinent to the mentoring process needs to be shared, and that information should be shared among the student, the mentor and the teacher. Personally sensitive information should not be given to other mentors, community members or other students. Sensitive information should not be a part of group discussions or public forums. If the employer-liaison has questions about unclear areas concerning confidentiality, he or she should consult with the program coordinator.

Matching

The teacher or the employer-liaison uses professional judgment and application forms to create matches. Ideally, the employer-liaison and the teacher work together in the matching process, using their knowledge of employees and students, plus information from the application forms.

Consideration should be given to the disability-related needs of students and the special skills of mentors. Some students may particularly need the skills of mentors who have knowledge of how to empower a person with a disability. Care should be taken to create these matches whenever possible.

If a match is not successful, the mentee and mentor may be reassigned as needed.

Suggested Procedures

- First, agree on the roles and responsibilities of the employer-liaison and the teacher in the matching process.
- The employer-liaison and/or teacher review the application forms, and consider the qualities and needs of potential mentees. It is suggested that you:
    - Create same gender matches.
    - Create matches that consider disability-related needs and the skills and backgrounds of mentors.

Confidentiality, Boundaries, Monitoring, and Reporting

One important element of the Connecting to Success model is its careful consideration of youth needs, including the needs of youth with disabilities. While all youth need clear boundaries and consistent behavior from caring adults, these qualities are even more essential for at-risk youth who may have experienced inconsistency in their past relationships with adults. Some youth may not have learned how to establish and maintain appropriate boundaries. By modeling these skills, mentors teach youth this important skill. With this in mind, Connecting to Success emphasizes the following essential components: clear relationship boundaries, confidentiality, monitoring and reporting.

Boundaries

Connecting to Success is a school-based program. All activities take place either at the school or at the employer site, and are supervised by school or program staff. The primary activity is exchange of emails. There may also be occasional supervised, face-to-face meetings in a group setting.

If personal contact is wanted, a mentor may arrange to visit the student at the school during regular, supervised school activities. These clear boundaries are meant to protect both the mentor and mentee and to create a program structure that prevents misunderstanding and unrealistic expectations. Violating these boundaries my lead to harm to either the mentee or mentor. Traditional mentoring programs include thorough mentor screening including a background check. If a mentor and mentee want to expand their relationship beyond the parameters of Connecting to Success they should contact Big Brother/Big Sister or a comparable mentoring organization to facilitate screening, training and structuring of a more comprehensive mentoring relationship.

Confidentiality

Parental consent should be obtained for a student's participation in the e-mentoring program. Also, the confidentiality of disability-related information should be respected. Information may be disclosed as needed to mentors, but only with parental and student consent.

Monitoring

All emails should be read by a teacher or teacher's assistant to assure that the content is appropriate within the scope of Connecting to Success. For example, discussion of personal issues is appropriate; however, requesting money is not. In addition, if an email indicates that the mentor or mentee are violating the boundaries of the program, the teacher should promptly address the issue, offering a reminder regarding the boundaries and reasons for the boundaries. The following are examples of some boundary violations and inappropriate communications that may appear in an email:

- A request to borrow something.
- An invitation to an outing, a movie or social event.
- Use of personal email address rather than company or school email address.
- A request for contact outside the program parameters.
- Rude, vulgar or disrespectful statements.

Reporting

Other issues that could be revealed through emails are that of child-abuse, child-neglect, or threat of harm to self or others. If an email suggests the existence of such a situation, the teacher is considered the mandatory reporter. That is, the teacher is required to assess whether the incident is reportable and to report it to the proper authorities if appropriate. Mentors should relay information about any concerns about abuse, neglect or threat of harm to the teacher and allow the teacher to assess the situation. There may be exceptions in which a mentor or teacher should use their best judgment and act in consideration of the safety and welfare of those concerned.

Section 7
TEACHER

The teacher is integrally involved in the project from start to finish. The teacher should be invited to the initial meeting of key players and should be trained by the coordinator. The teacher then participates in mentor training and conducts mentee training. The teacher teams with the employer-liaison to create matches. Some sites have chosen to have a lead teacher or lead counselor who helps to facilitate the program at the local site.

The following section is intended to help clarify and define the roles and responsibilities of the teacher at a Connecting to Success site.

TEACHER JOB DESCRIPTION

Responsibilities

- Assess availability of computers at the school.
- Assess technology capabilities of students.
- Recruit students to participate.
- Have parents fill out permission sheets.
- Attend teacher training.
- Develop a curriculum to provide structure and guidance for email exchanges.
- Provide training for students.
- Work with employer-liaison to match students with mentors.
- Monitor weekly email exchanges for all participants.
- Maintain regular communication with mentors through a listserv and other means.
- Assist mentors with problem-solving concerning mentoring relationships.
- Reassign mentors if new matches are needed midyear.
- Be available to listen to concerns of mentors and mentees.

- As a mandated reporter, refer any reportable situations to the appropriate authorities or agency.
- Restrict contact between mentees and mentors to email exchanges and supervised employer- or school-sponsored events.
- Participate in the program evaluation.

Benefits

- Build a dynamic, cutting-edge element into your school curriculum
- Make a difference in the lives of students.
- Enhance your community's educational system and future workforce.
- Help students fulfill IEP goals.
- Interact with community members through the education process.
- Learn about local businesses and careers.

Desired Skills and Teacher Attitudes

- A sincere interest in well-being of all youth.
- Basic technical knowledge of email.
- Ability to teach reading and writing skills.
- Willingness to teach mentors and others about disabilities and challenges youth face.
- Willingness to learn about mentoring.

Facilitating Communication

The teacher plays an essential role in assuring clear and adequate communication within the program. The teacher maintains a listserv for mentors and provides support to mentors, posting notices about student achievements, information about student progress and the positive impact of mentor's efforts. The teacher may use the listserv as a vehicle for communicating with mentors about the curriculum and how it is used as a part of the e-mentoring relationship. A very important aspect of the teacher's role is keeping students and mentors informed of absences. For example, if during a particular week an e-mentor is going to be unable to email, the mentor should inform the teacher and the teacher should inform the student. If a student is absent, the teacher should inform the mentor. The teacher should also maintain regular communication with the local program coordinator regarding any program concerns, such as the relationship with the employer, the need for equipment, or marketing.

Mentee Recruiting

A The teacher's professional judgment should be the cornerstone of student recruiting.

B Suggested Minimum Criteria.

1 Fourth grade reading level.

2 Basic writing skills.

3 One year commitment.

4 Parental permission.

a to participate.

b to release limited information.

c This should be documented on a consent form signed and dated by the parents or legal guardian.

5 Functional technology skills.

6 The student's academic and personal life is stable enough that he/she will be able to benefit from e-mentoring.

C If the teacher uses academic credit or grading, the teacher should explain the procedures to students during the recruiting phase. (Focus groups have indicated that academic credit has helped to produce motivation and success among students in the program.)

Confidentiality, Boundaries, Monitoring, and Reporting

One important element of the Connecting to Success model is its careful consideration of youth needs, including the needs of youth with disabilities. While all youth need clear boundaries and consistent behavior from caring adults, these qualities are even more essential for at-risk youth who may have experienced inconsistency in their past relationships with adults. Some youth may not have learned how to establish and maintain appropriate boundaries. By modeling these skills, mentors teach youth this important skill. With this in mind, Connecting to Success emphasizes the following essential components: clear relationship boundaries, confidentiality, monitoring and reporting.

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Confidentiality

Parents' consent should be obtained for a student's participation in the e-mentoring program. Also, the confidentiality of disability-related information should be respected. Information may be disclosed as needed to mentors, but only with parental and student consent.

Monitoring

All emails should be read by a teacher or teacher's assistant to assure that the content is appropriate within the scope of Connecting to Success. For example, discussion of personal issues is appropriate; however, requesting money is not. In addition, if an email indicates that the mentor or mentee are violating the boundaries of the program, the teacher should promptly address the issue, offering a reminder regarding the boundaries and reasons for the boundaries. The following are examples of some boundary violations and inappropriate communications that may appear in an email:

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Mentee/Student Training

Student orientation and training is important to prepare students for their e-mentor and to be sure of their basic skills in e-mentoring technology. Before the first emails are sent, students should know how to address and send an email. They also should be familiar with the program's goals and objectives and where they can go for help if something is not working in their e-mentoring relationship. They must know the boundaries of the program with a particular emphasis on the emails being limited to school and work computers and the face-to-face meetings occurring at the school or the mentor's place of work as a whole program gathering.

Student training should include:

- Understanding of the role of an e-mentor.
- Orientation to the program goals and objectives.
- Instruction in keyboarding and emailing.
- Boundaries and guidelines.
- Orientation to the mentor's place of employment.
- Orientation and expectations of the curriculum assignments.
- Expectations of students.
- Practice in asking and answering questions and interviewing skills.

Confidentiality and Matching

Matching

The teacher or the employer-liaison uses professional judgment and application forms to create matches. Ideally, the employer-liaison and the teacher work together in the matching process, using their knowledge of employees and students, plus information from the application forms.

Consideration should be given to the disability-related needs of students and the special skills of mentors. Some students may particularly need the skills of mentors who have knowledge of how to empower a person with a disability. Care should be taken to create these matches whenever possible.

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Suggested procedures:

- First, agree on the roles and responsibilities of the employer-liaison and the Teacher in the matching process.
- The employer-liaison and/or teacher review the application forms, and consider the qualities and needs of potential mentees.

It is suggested that you:

- Create same gender matches.
- Create matches that consider disability-related needs.and the skills of mentors.

Linking Emails to Curriculum

Connecting to Success does not include a prescriptive curriculum. Instead, the program acknowledges that each teacher will tailor the program to classroom and existing curriculum needs. Teachers are encouraged to be creative in using e-mentoring as an adjunct to existing curriculum. The following are some suggestions that can be used by teachers at their own discretion. Some examples are also included of curriculum ideas.

Teachers should meet with mentors at the outset of the program to discuss how curriculum will be integrated into the program. The degree to which curriculum is a part of the program is up to the teacher. If curriculum is a part of the program, the teacher should communicate with mentors weekly through the listserv to tell them about the week's lesson. The following are some options:

Unstructured

Emails are purely conversational. Mentors may help with homework or with class assignments if requested but the teacher does not direct this. This option can be

linked to curriculum in that students will improve their writing and communication skills through writing and reading emails.

Weekly Questions

Emails are directly linked to classroom curriculum objectives. Each week the teacher notifies mentors through the listserv of a question or topic relevant to the week's curriculum. For example, if the class is reading A Tale of Two Cities, then perhaps the teacher requests that the mentors read along with the class. Then she posts weekly discussion topics related to the book. The Weekly Questions format works for a variety of topics, including Career Readiness (See example).

Project-Based

Either the teacher assigns a project, or the mentee and mentor develop a project (with teacher approval). The weekly emails focus in part on planning, development and completion of this project. Some projects that have been used in e-mentoring settings are development of a website, development of a web-based photo album, and writing a report. Some additional ideas are outlining an idea for an invention, writing song lyrics, and developing a career map (See example).

Curriculum Examples

The following lesson plans were excerpted from Achieve!Minneapolis's E-Mentoring Manual.

Weekly Questions – Lesson Idea 1

Title: The Introduction Interview

Purpose: To introduce students and mentors to each other.

Summary

The student will send the first message sharing name, age, and something about themselves and/or their school. The mentors will send a message containing the following information and questions:

- Name.
- Email address.
- Explanation of the type of company the mentor works for and how long they have worked for the company.
- Job title.
- Request for information the student's (e.g. when the school day begins/ends, what subjects they are taking, what is their favorite part of the school day and why, etc).

The student should respond with answers to the above questions, give their own introductions, and ask the following questions in the form of an interview:

- How often and for what reasons do you use email at your work?
- What is your job and what do you do each day?
- What do you like best about your career?
- Did you have to have a college degree to get your job? If so, what kind of degree did you earn and what college did you attend?
- Students should also devise three additional questions on their own.

Each student should use this information to write a brief story about their mentors. The students should send the stories via email to the mentors for review and proofing. Each mentor should read the story and make corrections and suggestions on how to improve it. The mentor should make comments about grammar, structure, and punctuation; however, the mentor is not expected to "grade" the story. It is important to make positive comments about the written story and find places to affirm what the student has accomplished.

Benefits

- Gives mentors and students a platform to build on for future interactions and transmissions
- Gives the students writing practice
- Provides the students with career inquiry and interviewing experience

Weekly Questions – Lesson Idea 2

Title: What I've Learned
Purpose: To connect the mentor to the classroom, allowing students to "show what they know" and, in the process, improve basic writing and email skills.

Summary

In their weekly emails, the students will report one thing they have learned in class in the past week. The students should explain why they believe this is important or how they may use this in the future. This allows the mentors to be linked to what is happening in the classroom, and encourages the students to reflect upon what they have learned. In response, the mentors should send an encouraging reply that includes how the students' newly gained information will be useful in the real world. If possible the mentors should relate to the student how the skill or information is used in the workplace. This reinforces the importance of student's learning, specifically it helps the student to understand the relationship between work and learning.

Teacher's Role

Communicate with mentors about in-class curriculum on a weekly basis. This allows mentors to ask specific and leading questions to engage reluctant students.

Additional Possibilities

- Students keep a weekly learning journal or portfolio of their learning.
- At the end of each quarter the students and mentors prepare a press release to the parents, the business partner, or school district which highlights their acquired knowledge and skills over the past term.
- Students and mentors work on a group project to create a presentation to publicize a specific project completed by the class over the semester, such as:

English

- Book read by class.
- Poetry.
- Creative writing.

Science

- Lab project.
- Science fair project.
- Environmental issue.

Social Studies

- History day project.
- Geography (country/culture/region).

Math

- A lesson implementing a mathematical skill in a real-life situation teaching younger children specific math skills.

Art

- Create an electronic portfolio featuring scans of students' artwork. (This could also be done with other classwork to create other portfolios.)

Weekly Questions – Lesson Idea 3

Title: Email Skills for Today and the Future

Purpose: Students will gain useful skills in email communication that have real-world applications.

Summary

Copying documents into an email message

As part of a classroom assignment, students will develop a word processing document. The document can then be copied into the text of an email transmission to the students' mentors. The document could be a short story, book report, essay or lab report. The students should request that their mentors make editing changes. The students should also inquire about how the mentors would use the specific email skill in the workplace. The mentor can offer editing suggestions or other feedback to improve the piece. Additionally, this allows the mentors to take a look into the classroom

Sending and downloading attached files with an email message.

Complete a project as above but, instead of copying the document into the email itself, attach the file to the message. The mentors should also send the students a message with an attachment so that the student can learn how to download such files. In addition, the mentors can explain how email is used in their workplace and, specifically, how attachments are utilized.

Teacher's Role

The teacher will let the mentors know what the assignment is—poetry, a book report, essay, short story—so that the mentors can provide the appropriate help with editing. The teacher, or a technology resource person, will need to instruct the students in the above email skills.

Benefits

- Help students understand the relationship between work and learning.
- Allows students to perform advanced email projects later in the school year.
- Gives the mentor a view to what is taking place in the classroom.
- Provides an opportunity for students to "show what they know."
- Enables students to learn work-related skills and gain practice in writing.
- Allows students to reach technology requirements of different content areas of the Graduation Standards.

Weekly Questions – Lesson Idea 4

Title: Career Inquiry

Purpose: Students develop a list of careers they might like to pursue later in life

Summary

Part I – Over the course of a quarter, or semester, mentors will ask a series of questions to determine the career interests of their students. The questions will come from a career interest inventory, either a commercially available instrument or one created by the teachers for this purpose. Teachers need to share with each mentor a copy of the instrument and instructions for the project.

Part II – Students and mentors then complete internet research on those careers and the education, experience and work related experience required to work in those fields.

Part III–The students should follow-up with interviews of the mentors regarding their education, experience, skills, and what these things prepared them to do. The students should also ask what other careers their mentors looked at before deciding upon their current jobs.

Teacher's Role

Develop a series of questions for the students to ask their mentors about their careers, education, and experience.

Benefits

- Can be used to meet the Curriculum Standards.
- Helps students understand the link between educational achievement and career opportunities.

A Project-Based Curriculum Outline

One type of e-mentoring curriculum is based on development and completion of a project in conjunction with the e-mentoring relationship. This has been found to add focus to the e-mentoring relationship. The following is an outline of lesson plans that would facilitate dialogue and guide the mentor and mentee through a project. Throughout the process, the mentee and mentor should continue sharing personal information, thoughts and feelings to further develop their relationship.

Lesson Plan 1: Hello – basic introduction. Mentor shares a little bit about his/her job and several interests. Mentee shares age, grade, classes he/she is taking and how he/she feels about the classes as well as several interests.

Lesson Plan 2: Respond to the first email and add some additional information about yourself including some questions of the other person.

Lesson Plan 3: Identify a common interest and talk about it.

Lesson Plan 4: Brainstorming – Brainstorm about how a common interest or other topic could be the focus of a project. Talk about what kinds of projects are most appealing.

Lesson Plan 5: Getting Somewhere – Talk about how projects are done in the workplace. How these are important to the employer. Talk about ground rules for project development.

Lesson Plan 6: What's My Style? – Each person shares about their style of getting work done, including strengths and weaknesses, plus how challenges to getting work done can be overcome.

Lesson Plan 7: Dreaming and Scheming – Mentor and mentee talk about their ideas for the project. Lesson encourages them to use imagination and creativity and not to be critical of ideas at this point. Lesson could focus on how to share ideas in the workplace.

Lesson Plan 8: Planning Promotes Success – Mentor and mentee talk about the importance of planning and how this plays out in the workplace. They develop a flexible plan for accomplishing their project.

Lesson Plan 9: The Finishing Touches – Mentor and mentee finalize their plan. They decide who will do what; if any resources are needed; and they set timelines for finishing the project. They talk about deadlines and how these operate in the workplace.

Lesson Plan 10: Project Discussions. Mentor and mentee talk about progress on the project. Lesson could focus on the importance of following through.

Lesson Plan 11: Project Discussions. Mentor and mentee talk about progress on the project. Lesson could focus on attitudes that help in the workplace.

Lesson Plan 12: Getting down to work. Mentor and mentee work on project. Lesson could focus on what to do if you make a mistake in the workplace.

Lesson Plan 13: Celebrate. Mentor and mentee celebrate completion of the project. A reminder is given that the mentoring program will end in two weeks.

Lesson Plan 14: Evaluate. Mentor and mentee talk about what they've learned and what they liked about the e-mentoring program. A reminder is given that the project will be ending next week.

Lesson Plan 15: Closure. Mentor and mentee share one dream for the future, and say good-bye.

Additional Curriculum Ideas

The reference section of the manual has two excellent pieces on which further curriculum could be built. One is entitled "Activity Ideas for Online Mentors and Proteges" and the other is "Mentor Guide to Encouraging Workplace Skills." They are both directed to the mentor, but would be very helpful to the teacher in planning the curriculum.

Email Content

Youth Trust staff have recommended that each email from mentors integrate the following:

- Conversation – A casual, conversational opening statement.
- Curriculum – A question or statement that refers to the or lesson plan for the week. This is established between the teacher and the employer/mentors prior to the initiation of emails. For example, the teacher and mentors may agree that for ten weeks, a portion of the emails will focus on an English project involving the Victorian Era, or perhaps the teacher and mentors have agreed to a project-based curriculum. Each week, there is an element of the school curriculum integrated into the email.
- Marketable Skills – The mentor can tie the discussion into marketable employment skills, teaching the mentee about qualities that promote success in the workplace.
- Resolution – This is the summarizing statement. It is a casual, conversational ending to the email. Perhaps the mentor wants to pose a question. Or there may be some conversation about what will be happening in the coming week.

Face-to-Face Meetings

E-mentoring allows people to communicate regularly and with a certain convenience. However, another important part of the program are the face-to-face meetings.

These typically occur twice or three times during the year. We have found that the first meeting should occur within the early weeks of the program preferably after two or three emails. The initial emails break the ice and begin to establish a relationship. Students then become very interested in meeting this invisible correspondent. It is helpful for the first gathering to take place at the mentor's worksite. This give students a workplace experience and provides a good job shadowing opportunity. The event needs to be well planned and organized, not open ended.

Suggested Agenda Items for First Face-to-Face Meeting

- Mentors and mentees are introduced using an effective process to identify one another.
- A structured getting to know one another activity.
- A tour of the workplace.
- Mentor and mentee spend 10 minutes at the mentor's worksite.
- Return to the large gathering area.
- Structured activity that processes the tour and the mentor's worksite.
- Closing.

Section 8

MENTOR

An e-mentor is an employee with the employer-partner who volunteers to participate in e-mentoring with one student during one academic school year. The e-mentor is someone who has a desire to contribute to the success of a young person and does so by offering friendship, acceptance, and academic support. An e-mentor participates in orientation and training events and corresponds with the teacher and employer-liaison about mentoring issues. An e-mentor follows the parameters of the Connecting to Success project, which are somewhat different than that of traditional mentoring programs (See Mentor Training).

The following section is intended to help clarify and define the roles and responsibilities of the mentor at a Connecting to Success site.

MENTOR JOB DESCRIPTION

Responsibilities

- Attend all required orientation and training events.
- Attend any school- or employer- sponsored face-to-face meetings.
- Commit to participate with one student for one school year.
- Agree to one or more weekly email exchanges.
- Bring any issues concerning confidentiality, boundaries, child safety. (i.e. child abuse), academic progress or mentor/mentee relationship to the teacher or coordinator immediately.
- Restrict contact with mentees to work/school email exchanges and supervised employer- or school-sponsored events according to the guidelines of the program.
- Assist students in developing communication skills.
- Assist student in understanding the world of work and career-related skills.
- Hold high expectations for all students, including students with disabilities.

- Act as a role model.
- Foster career readiness by modeling promptness, reliability and dependability.
- Inspire students to achieve their potential.
- Encourage mentees to make their own decisions and take responsibility for them.
- Allow mentees to struggle with their own issues while acting as a supportive, caring ally.
- Be open to different perspectives on life, including those of diverse cultures.

Time Commitment

- Orientation and training: 3 – 7 hours prior to program initiation.
- Email exchanges: 1 hour per week.
- Sponsored face-to-face meetings: 6 hours per year.
- Ongoing training: Depends on site.

Benefits

- Make a difference in a young person's life.
- Enhance your community's educational system and future workforce.
- Become acquainted with other volunteers.
- Receive training in relationship enhancement and communication skills.
- Increase your understanding of the issues at-risk youth face.
- Increase your awareness of diverse groups of people.

Desired Skills and Mentor Attitudes

- A sincere interest in the well-being of all youth.
- Basic technical knowledge of email.
- Functional business writing skills (12th grade writing skills).
- Willingness to learn about disabilities and challenges youth face.
- Employed with the school's employer-partner.

The Role of an E-Mentor

A Connecting to Success e-mentor is someone who volunteers to exchange emails with a student for one school year.

By exchanging weekly emails, students can begin to learn:

- What it is like in the world of work?
- What does it take to be successful?
- How do people overcome problems so they can accomplish their goals?
- What are my strengths and how can I build on them?

This program seeks to:

- Motivate and inspire students to achieve their potential.
- Give students a fun format for learning writing skills and developing career awareness.
- Give employees a fun format for learning about capabilities of diverse students.

A Connecting to Success e-mentor is someone who:

- Gives a mentee encouragement in reaching his or her goals.
- Expects a mentee to give her/his best effort.
- Provides support and motivation while a mentee is improving skills.
- Will not expect less from anyone because of a disability or limitation.
- Only communicates with a mentee either at school through email or at planned school or company meetings.
- Acts as a role model and advisory figure.
- Is willing to share appropriate thoughts, feelings, experiences and ideas with a student.
- Encourages and facilitates the student in learning how to make decisions.

A Connecting to Success e-mentor is someone who DOES NOT:

- Act like a mother or father to a mentee.
- Give out a home address or home phone number or home email.
- Meet with a mentee after school, talk with a mentee on the telephone after school, or bring the mentor/mentee relationship outside the parameters of the Connecting to Success project.
- Give a mentee money or gifts.
- Become the mentee's counselor or therapist.

Mentor Training

Policies and Expectations

- Commitment to participate for one school year. This provides continuity for the student through the year. Disruptions or switching could impact the student's progress. This is about 30 to 45 minutes per week online, with two to three face-to-face meetings per year at the employer site or a controlled school setting.
- Address any problems through appropriate means typically by contacting the employer liaison or the teacher.
- Bring any issues concerning confidentiality, boundaries, child safety, academic progress or the mentor/mentee relationship to the teacher promptly.
- Address any employer related issues by contacting the employer-liaison promptly.
- Focus on goals and outcomes of the project.
- Copy all email transmissions to the appropriate person(s).
- Participate in the program evaluation (a brief survey).

Why We Need You to be an E-Mentor

Your Involvement Can Provide a Student With:

- The caring support of an adult who will listen with patience and respond to them.
- Exposure to the larger world of work. Many times students have a limite sense of career possibilities and the scope of one job. You can help by sharing about your job as well as the variety of career options at your place of work. If your company has global connections it may expand their vision. They also need to know what skills are needed and what values are important in the work place.
- An opportunity to practice communication skills in order to interact positively with others. Students will need to learn to ask effective questions and to answer questions that you pose to them. In the process they will learn more about getting to know a new person which is a lifelong skill needed socially and professionally.
- The chance to gain knowledge about the importance of educational achieve ment to career opportunities.
- Experience with someone encouraging their dreams and helping them to believe in themselves.

Thank you in advance for giving your time, care and wisdom on behalf of a young person's realizing her full potential.

Challenges and Strategies for Working with High Risk Youth

Many youth will be receptive and excited about the opportunity to participate in mentoring. Others may be reluctant for different reasons.

Some youth may have previously experienced abandonment, alienation and isolation in their relationships with adults. These youth may wonder why all of a sudden adults are taking an interest ("Why me?" "Why now?").

Some youth may be isolated from their community through educational, social, economic and developmental barriers. They may occasionally be contacted by community agencies, but they may have a low level of trust for these interventions. Such students may be skeptical of a mentoring program as being another one of these random efforts to "help." (David de Rosenroll, et al. (1993) The Canadian Stay-In-School Mentor Strategy. Victoria: PSCG.)

A successful mentoring program will respond to the needs and the unspoken questions of these students in a number of ways:

- A mentor who senses disengagement from a student should patiently persist in communicating through email. Reliability and dependability are important. The mentor should maintain an attitude of being an equal with the student rather than an authority figure. A student may test the mentor's intentions and trustworthiness by initially not engaging in the relationship. Understand that this may be a self-protection mechanism that has previously served the youth in other environments.
- Students are sensitive to mentor absences. If you are unable to email at the expected time, be sure to notify teacher and student of your schedule, noting when you will be away and when you will return. As much as possible, maintain your commitment to exchange emails weekly during the academic year.
- Mentors, teachers and employers should expect achievement from students. Anticipate that you will be able to work through trust issues by open communication and demonstration of reliability. Despite any difficulties that may exist in the mentee's life, know that you can help foster specific talents and abilities the mentee possesses through the mentoring relationship.
- Practice active listening. When a mentee expresses an interest in something, ask about it. If the timing seems right, ask for further information. Talk about baseball, prom, music, or whatever creates an opening for communication to develop.

- Understand that some students, especially those with disabilities, may have had a "failure experience" in school. They may dislike school because they have received continuous negative feedback and perceive themselves as academic failures. Remember to focus on the student's strengths, whether these are academic, athletic, social, or artistic. Recognizing and pointing out strengths will lead to growth and change. Be supportive and reassuring wherever you can.

Additional Tips From Connecting to Success Staff

- Exploring alternatives and helping youth to make their own decisions is usually more effective than criticism or preaching or lecturing.
- Within the parameters of the program, be sensitive to what students want to discuss and where they seem to be reluctant. Some youth may try to shock you with information and others may resist sharing. Either case will take discernment and may require the counsel of the teacher.
- What may seem like a small gain to you may be major for the student. Hold high expectation, but also be realistic for the particular person with whom you are working.

Email Content

Youth Trust staff have recommended that each email from mentors integrate the following:

- Conversation—A casual, conversational opening statement.
- Curriculum—A question or statement that refers to the or lesson plan for the week. This is established between the teacher and the employer/mentors prior to the initiation of emails. For example, the teacher and mentors may agree that for ten weeks, a portion of the emails will focus on an English project involving the Victorian Era, or perhaps the teacher and mentors have agreed to a project-based curriculum. Each week, there is an element of the school curriculum integrated into the email.
- Marketable Skills—The mentor can tie the discussion into marketable employment skills, teaching the mentee about qualities that promote success in the workplace.
- Resolution—This is the summarizing statement. It is a casual, conversational ending to the email. Perhaps the mentor wants to pose a question. Or there may be some conversation about what will be happening in the coming week.

Face-to-Face Meetings

E-mentoring allows people to communicate regularly and with a certain convenience. However, another important part of the program are the face-to-face meetings. These typically occur twice or three times during the year. We have found that the first meeting should occur within the early weeks of the program preferably after two or three emails. The initial emails break the ice and begin to establish a relationship. Students then become very interested in meeting this invisible correspondent. It is helpful for the first gathering to take place at the mentor's worksite. This give students a workplace experience and provides a good job shadowing opportunity. The event needs to be well planned and organized, not open ended.

Suggested Agenda Items for First Face-to-Face Meeting

- Mentors and mentees are introduced using an effective process to identify one another.
- A structured getting to know one another activity.
- A tour of the workplace.
- Mentor and mentee spend 10 minutes at the mentor's worksite.
- Return to the large gathering area.
- Structured activity that processes the tour and the mentor's worksite.
- Closing.

Confidentiality, Boundaries, Monitoring, and Reporting

One important element of the Connecting to Success model is its careful consideration of youth needs, including the needs of youth with disabilities. While all youth need clear boundaries and consistent behavior from caring adults, these qualities are even more essential for at-risk youth who may have experienced inconsistency in their past relationships with adults. Some youth may not have learned how to establish and maintain appropriate boundaries. By modeling these skills, mentors teach youth this important skill. With this in mind, Connecting to Success emphasizes the following essential components: clear relationship boundaries, confidentiality, monitoring and reporting.

Boundaries

Connecting to Success is a school-based program. All activities take place either at the school or at the employer site, and are supervised by school or program staff. The primary activity is exchange of emails. There may also be occasional supervised, face-to-face meetings in a group setting.

If personal contact is wanted, a mentor may arrange to visit the student at the school during regular, supervised school activities. These clear boundaries are meant to protect both the mentor and mentee and to create a program structure that prevents misunderstanding and unrealistic expectations. Violating these boundaries my lead to harm to either the mentee or mentor. Traditional mentoring programs include thorough mentor screening including a background check. If a mentor and mentee want to expand their relationship beyond the parameters of Connecting to Success they should contact Big Brother/Big Sister or a comparable mentoring organization to facilitate screening, training and structuring of a more comprehensive mentoring relationship.

Confidentiality

Parental consent should be obtained for a student's participation in the ementoring program. Also, the confidentiality of disability-related information should be respected. Information may be disclosed as needed to mentors, but only with parental and student consent.

Monitoring

All emails should be read by a teacher or teacher's assistant to assure that the content is appropriate within the scope of Connecting to Success. For example, discussion of personal issues is appropriate; however, requesting money is not. In addition, if an email indicates that the mentor or mentee are violating the boundaries of the program, the teacher should promptly address the issue, offering a reminder regarding the boundaries and reasons for the boundaries. The following are examples of some boundary violations and inappropriate communications that may appear in an email:

- A request to borrow something.
- An invitation to an outing, a movie or social event.
- Use of personal email address rather than company or school email address.
- A request for contact outside the program parameters.
- Rude, vulgar or disrespectful statements.

Reporting

Other issues that could be revealed through emails are that of child-abuse, child-neglect, or threat of harm to self or others. If an email suggests the existence of such a situation, the teacher is considered the mandatory reporter. That is, the teacher is required to assess whether the incident is reportable and to report it to the proper authorities if appropriate. Mentors should relay information about any concerns about abuse, neglect or threat of harm to the teacher and allow the teacher to assess the situation. There may be exceptions in which a mentor or teacher should use their best judgment and act in consideration of the safety and welfare of those concerned.

Section 9

MENTEE

A mentee is a student who seeks to improve academic skills and work related skills by corresponding with an e-mentor via email for one school year. A mentee completes mentee training and makes a point of sending weekly emails as well as answering emails from mentors.

The following section is intended to help clarify and define the roles and responsibilities of the mentee at a Connecting to Success site.

MENTEE JOB DESCRIPTION

Responsibilities

- Participate in one or more weekly email exchanges.
- Share your thoughts, feelings and experiences with your mentor.
- Be prompt, reliable, honest and dependable.
- Use your skills and creativity in writing to your mentor.
- Make your own decisions and take responsibility for them.
- Work to overcome your own problems but be open to the support of your mentor.
- Develop your writing and reading skills.
- Contact the teacher if there are problems in the mentoring relationship.
- Contact the teacher if you are having problems with the computer.
- Only contact your mentor by email from school.
- Participate in supervised employer- or school-sponsored events with your mentor.
- Attend training for mentees.
- Be open to different outlooks on life, including those from different cultures.

Benefits

- Friendship of a caring adult.
- Have fun while learning.
- Gain skills that will help you succeed in life.
- Learn more about yourself.
- Learn about careers and the world of work.
- Gain self-confidence.

Qualifications

- A sincere interest in writing to your mentor.
- Basic technical knowledge of email.
- Basic writing skills (at least fourth grade level).
- Ability to exchange emails weekly.

Mentee Training

What is e-mentoring?

An e-mentor is a real, live, human being who works somewhere in your community. An e-mentor is someone who volunteered to exchange emails with you for one school year. By writing at least weekly to your e-mentor, you can begin to find answers to these questions:

- What it is like in the world of work?
- What does is take to be successful?
- What are your strengths and how can you build on them?
- How do people overcome problems so they can accomplish their goals?

An e-mentor is someone who:

- Will give you encouragement in reaching your goals.
- Will expect you to give your best effort.
- Will be supportive as you improve your skills.
- Will not expect less from you because of a disability or limitation.
- Will only communicate with you either during school or at planned school meetings.

An e-mentor is NOT someone who:

- Is like a mother or father.
- Can not meet with you after school or talk with you on the telephone after school or meet with you at your home or in the community or send you emails outside of his/her work email.
- Will give or loan you money or other things.
- Will always see things your way.

The goals of this project are to:

- Motivate and inspire students to achieve their potential.
- Give students a fun format for learning writing skills and developing career awareness.
- Help employers and other people learn about the capabilities of students like you.

Outcomes important to the project are:

- Improved writing and reading skills.
- Relationship with a caring adult.
- Greater career awareness.
- Enhanced academic motivation.
- Greater social competence.
- Improved access to technology.

How E-mentoring Works

Your teacher will show you how to use the email system at your school. Every week, the teacher will assign a topic for writing to your e-mentor. You will write the email and then send it through a computer at your school.

Your e-mentor will write back to you, and you can get the message by going into your school's computerized email system. Your teacher will be monitoring these messages to make sure things are going OK.

Your e-mentor will expect you to use the same respect and courtesy that is used in the business world. He or she will also expect you to use the same effective writing that is used in the business world. If your writing is not that good now, strive to improve it so that it is as good as your mentor's writing. Before you send an email, check your grammar, punctuation and spelling. Proofread your email to make sure it says what you mean.

Problems?

If you have problems with the computer or problems in your relationship with your e-mentor, talk with your teacher about it right away.

Section 10

Launching a CTS Program Site

This chapter was adapted from an Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor (ODEP) sponsored program, new Program Guide for the High School/High Tech. The guide has been prepared by the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability/Youth managed by the Center for Workforce Development at the Institute for Educational Leadership, Washington, DC.

An organization or group that carries the banner of Connecting to Success acts as broker, or intermediary, tapping into a wide range of stakeholders, each with an interest in improving opportunities for youth with disabilities but may be unable to do so alone due to limitations in staffing, budget, time, or mission. These brokering organizations bring together interested parties from schools, community organizations, and local businesses to make the best use of available resources and to share expertise. In this chapter you will find information needed to provide support, promotion, funding, and staffing for a successful ementoring program.

Because of its role in transition issues at a national level, NCSET brings together big-picture resources to develop federal and business partnerships to support CTS. NCSET also uses compiled data, program history, and policy feedback from the field to develop and improve the program model. Additionally, NCSET staff works to build an active community of CTS sites and participants, who are linked through their common goals and commitment and are willing to share best practices with others.

Most of the work in launching and building a program is done at the state and local level. It is best to have a range of agencies and organizations involved in promoting the development of CTS at each local site or throughout the state. Different strategies work for different situations based on the scope of the program or the number of intended student participants.

During the spring and summer of 2000, staff from Achieve!Minneapolis, the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET) at the

University of Minnesota, Iowa Paths, and Minnesota's Department of Children, Families, and Learning (CFL) developed an adaptation of Achieve!Minneapolis' adopt-a-classroom e-mentoring model. This e-mentoring model was being used successfully by the Minneapolis Public Schools in partnership with General Mills and other Minnesota-based corporations. Evaluations of the project found that students and teachers felt that students improved writing skills and career readiness by corresponding via email with mentors.

In practice, teachers guided the communication process so that emails corresponded with academic and career readiness standards. Periodically, students and mentors met face-to-face at structured events. The project generated excitement in the Minneapolis area because it linked students with mentors in a convenient way that enhanced academic performance. NCSET staff realized that e-mentoring was compatible with an "all means all" philosophy, providing another format for classroom career readiness activities that involve all youth, including youth with disabilities.

In fiscal-year 2000, the Presidential Task Force on Employment of Adults with Disabilities provided start-up funds to NCSET for the purpose of demonstrating the electronic mentoring model for high school students with disabilities at four program sites. The primary goal of this project was to use e-mentoring as a strategy to promote successful academic and employment outcomes for youth with disabilities. The model emphasized specific learning goals for students and focused on the development of effective writing and communication skills, occupational awareness and career development, and social skills, with the added intent to improve student motivation for learning.

The Connecting to Success (CTS) partners established two pilot sites in Minnesota. In Minneapolis, students from South High School were paired with mentors from ADC Communications and from Achieve!Minneapolis. In New Hope, students from Options North School were paired with mentors from General Mills.

CTS also established two pilot sites in Iowa. In Oskaloosa, students from special eduction programs were paired with mentors from Musco Lighting, the Pepper Tree Restaurant, Mahaska County Community Health Center, Harvest Point Golf Course, the Iowa State University Veterinary School, and the Oskaloosa Chamber of Commerce. In Bettendorf, students from Bettendorf and Pleasant Valley High Schools were paired with mentors from Sivyer Steel, RSM McGladry, Ruhl & Ruhl, Mississippi Bend Area Education, Group Services, the Horizon Group, and AAA Iowa.

Achieve!Minneapolis, Iowa Paths, and the Minnesota CFL have remained significantly involved in the development of our project, helping to guide, shape, and improve the program as it grows. To date, CTS has matched over 100 mentors and students through its original sites.

How to Begin the Process

As we have noted, because of the nature of the e-mentoring model, support from multiple stakeholders is essential. In Table 1, we list many of the likely participants in a CTS program. Establishing a group of key individuals to start an ementoring program might come from more than a couple of these different areas and input from families and students themselves is usually quite useful. This core group should prepare carefully to devise strategy and develop an implementation plan. It is important to build in enough time to recruit participants, raise needed funding, and have technology needs in place.

Table 1 Establishing a Planning Committee

Stakeholder group	Possible sources for membership	Supporting information	Who will contact?
Employers	Business Leadership Networks (BLN) Local Chambers of Commerce Chapters of American Society of Training & Development (ASTD) and/or Society of Human Resource Managers (SHRM) Employers involved in youth council for the local Workforce Investment Board (WIB) Industry associations (e.g., IT, Manufacturing) Employers involved in School-to-Work partnerships, Rotary Clubs and other business groups, etc.		
Disability	Vocational Rehabilitation advisory groups Centers for Independent Living Developmental disabilities groups Service organizations serving various forms of disabilities Youth Leadership groups CTS students		
Workforce Development Organizations	Workforce Investment Boards (WIB) Youth councils One-Stop Centers Rehabilitation organizations Social Security Income (SSI) offices		
K-12 Education	Representative(s) of state or local education agencies: Superintendent or designee Secondary vocational education teachers Special needs coordinators Transition coordinators, etc.		
Post-Secondary Educational Institutions	College and university offices of disability counseling services Technical training school representatives IT instructors, etc.		
Family	Parent education and training centers Parents of CTS youth		
Community Leaders	Mayor's offices Elected officials Local foundations United Way, etc.		

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Finding the Fiscal and Human Resources

Unfortunately, NCSET is not a funding source for initiating CTS programs. This means that to get a CTS program site up and running requires development of strong partnerships with all possible partner agencies – schools and businesses, governmental and community agencies. To build and sustain CTS, operators must be creative. There are no hard and fast rules related to funding since a great deal depends on the way the programs are run. We do know that whether you are seeking government or private funding, one key rule prevails: you must pay attention to the donor's mission, rules and focus.

Access to staff support may be as important as the dollars–and it comes from different, sometimes unexpected, sources. When you are preparing a budget and planning program implementation, keep an eye out for in-kind contributions. Many organizations that are involved in CTS have limited or little discretionary funds to spare, but they are able to participate by offering staff support, in-kind donations, and technology expertise.

Table 2 Putting a Budget Together

Function	Amount/ In-Kind	Potential Sources
Personnel (coordinator/intermediary, teachers and paraprofessionals, mentorship management, technical support and computer training)		
Site rental (may include technology lab or space for face to face meetings)		
Supplies and food for events		
Assistive supports and reasonable accommodations as necessary		
Technology (computers, Internet connections and accounts, printers, etc.)		
Transportation (site visits, transportation to work sites)		
Curriculum development (e.g. topics for mentoring, worksheets, guides, etc.)		
Training for participants (materials, transportation, space, outside trainers)		

Government funding resources

Some key pieces of federal legislation establish and provide support and services for youth with disabilities. Others fund specific mentoring initiatives, or educational or workforce development initiatives that might lend themselves to a mentoring component. However, fitting the pieces of different resources together requires trust and creativity. Each funder has a different mission, supports different services, and imposes different eligibility requirements. Funding opportunities may also be available through state or local government agencies. The Internet can be an invaluable tool for monitoring the different possibilities for this type of funding. Potential sources of government funding include departments of education, juvenile justice, and health and human services.

Private funding resources

There are three primary ways to secure private sector funding to support CTS programs: through independent private foundations, community foundations, and corporate philanthropy. A search on the Internet for funding organizations like the Foundation Center will turn up many surprising leads.

Independent private foundations

These are non-governmental, non-profit organizations with a principle fund or endowment. The foundation is managed by its own trustees and directors to maintain or increase charitable, educational, religious, or other activities serving the public good. An independent private foundation makes grants, most often to other non-profit organizations.

Community foundations

Community foundations provide funding for a defined geographic area. They pool the resources of many donors and also provide a venue to assist smaller foundations in managing their assets and allocating their funds. Community foundations usually have a broad scope and local community focus. Funding is usually granted based on the needs of the local community, which can evolve over time, creating a change in the types of programs that are awarded grants.

Corporate philanthropy

Corporate philanthropy is of particular importance to CTS sites since the initiative is strongly tied with corporations and local businesses. Trends in corporate giving show that philanthropic programs are increasingly relying on employee committees and local executives to make decisions. Getting to know the local business leaders who might be interested in working with your site as an employer may lead to a contact for funding.

There are two ways in which a company or corporation makes contributions to non-profit programs – through a separate company foundation or through company-

sponsored giving programs. Corporate foundations are funded by corporate allocations to the foundation to carry out grant making. The foundation is usually set up as a separate but affiliated organization and may or may not be located at a site within the corporation. Company-sponsored foundations are separate legal entities that maintain close ties with the parent company. Their giving usually reflects company interests and they must follow the laws and regulations for private foundations, including filing an annual Form 990-PF with the IRS.

The Search for Private Funding Sources

Start your search by selecting the subjects, geographic limitations, and types of support needed by your CTS program site. When searching by subject, search listings that have expressed an interest in funding programs in a specific field, such as secondary education, technology, youth or workforce development. To do a geographic search, start with a geographic listing of donors that support programs in your city, state, or region. Although some give nationally and even internationally, most funding sources limit their giving to specific geographic areas. When searching by type of support, search for grants that focus on providing funds for your type of project, such as building/capital improvement, seed money, general operating support, or program-specific support.

Since your program must rely heavily on funding from grant sources, writing a solid funding proposal is imperative. Once you have written a successful grant application, use relevant portions as a template for other grants.

The Internet

Aside from the pre-selected foundations and corporations, there are a number of different information sources and resources for non-profit organizations on the Internet. Many foundations have email newsletters to which you can subscribe to receive periodic updates and breaking news on philanthropy.

Securing funding

The work undertaken to identify potential government dollars can also help focus a private fundraising campaign. Once you have defined your strategy and feel ready to start contacting funders, step back to consider the best approach to the grant proposal process.

The approach

Start out by limiting the funding sources you approach to those who are most likely to award a grant to your organization. Create a prospect list based on your organization's needs and strategy. Search Internet databases as well as your local network of contacts to develop a list of possible funders. Consider donors by looking at their descriptions and funding track record. For the prospect list, include foundations that have supported projects similar to yours and award the type of support you need. Make sure they are located in your geographic area or that they will award grants in your area.

The Grant Proposal

Proposal writing is just one step in the grant seeking process – and it's not necessarily the most important one. The proposal communicates in words the case you have built for your program. By the time you reach this step in the process, you will need to have fully developed your program or project goals and you should have researched and cultivated appropriate donors for your program. Governmental Request for Proposals (RFPs) and Solicitation for Grant Applications (SGAs) outline the areas that must be covered in the grant and rate the importance of each with a percentage value. When you write a grant, make sure that you have covered each and every area identified.

Here is a sample outline of a grant proposal for private sector donors.

- Executive Summary: Summarize your request.
- Introduction: Describe your organization's qualifications and credibility.
- Statement of need: Document the needs or the problems to be solved (use materials available in this guide and add as many local statistics and context possible).
- Objectives (sometimes referred to as goals and outcomes): Establish the benefits of the project in quantitative terms.
- Methods: Describe the activities you'll use to achieve your goals.
- Evaluation: Present a plan to determine outcome of your efforts.
- Future Funding:
  - Plan for continuation beyond the grant period.
  - Check out availability of other resources.
- Budget: Specify costs to be met by the grant, including in-kind if any.

Favorable grantee characteristics

One of the first things grant makers (governmental and private) will notice is the fit or match of the grant seeker with their organization's mission. A grant reviewer will immediately reject any proposal that is not in line with the funding mission. Other criteria that interest donors:

- The organization should be well known in its community and address an existing need.
- There should be a history of funding by other sources, governmental or private.
- Indication of responsible fiscal management.
- A strong board of directors/advisory council.
- Committed volunteers.
- Competent staff.
- A realistic and well-planned budget.

COMMON REASONS WHY PRIVATE SECTOR PROPOSALS ARE DECLINED

When crafting your grant proposal, it is helpful to know as much as possible about the grant making criteria. According to the Fundraising School at Indiana University, some of the most frequently cited reasons for foundations or corporations include:

- The project hasn't been documented properly.
- The project doesn't strike the reviewer as significant; statement of the project doesn't interest him/her.
- The prospective client groups have not been involved in planning and determining project goals.
- The proposal is poorly written, hard to understand.
- The proposal objectives do not match objectives of funding source.
- Proposal budget is not within range of funding available through the funding agency.
- The proposed project has not been coordinated with other individuals and organizations working in the same area.
- The funding source has not been made aware that those individuals submitting the proposal are able to carry out what is proposed – Not enough substantiating evidence is provided.
- Project objectives are too ambitious in scope.
- The proposal writer did not follow guidelines provided by funding agency.
- There is insufficient evidence that the project can sustain itself beyond the life of the grant.
- The evaluation procedure is inadequate.

(These private sector lessons are applicable when responding to governmental grants as well.)

Section 11

Evaluation Plan

We have included an outline of our evaluation plan for the pilot year of our project in Iowa and Minnesota. You will need to adapt this to your intended outcomes and evaluation needs. We also recommend Rebecca Saito's (2001) *What's working? Tools for evaluating your mentoring program* as a resource for designing evaluation of your program site.

Purpose of the Evaluation

The major goal of this project was to develop an e-mentoring model for youth with disabilities in transition using sites in Iowa and Minnesota. The purpose of this evaluation was to assess both the process of implementing the Connecting to Success e-mentoring project and to determine the program's impact on students with disabilities.

Specific implementation goals included:

- Establishing a Connecting to Success planning committee with representatives from each of the states, pilot sites, NCSET and the Youth Trust
- Developing and adapting the Connecting to Success model so that it incorporated the lessons learned from identified proven models and exemplary practices while addressing the special transition needs of youth with disabilities.
- Provide training, support, and technical assistance to state and pilot site staff on the implementation of Connecting to Success.

Specific project outcomes included:

- Connecting youth to positive role models in the world of work who understand their special needs.
- Building motivation for academic learning.
- Enhancing self-esteem.
- Improving skills in writing, composition, social interaction and career readiness.

- Integrating e-mentoring with achievement of transition/IEP goals.
- Increasing adults' knowledge and appreciation of students with disabilities.

As you are designing your evaluation, think of audiences that it may be helpful to. This could include but not be limited to funders, business partners, school partners, community partners, and program participants.

Intended Audiences

The intended audiences for an evaluation report could include but would not be limited to funders, business partners, school partners, community partners, national CTS staff, and program participants.

Uses of the Evaluation

The information from the evaluation will be used as a means of making program improvements and in the planning of future implementation efforts. The information will also be used to modify technical assistance activities, when appropriate, to ensure their effectiveness and ongoing improvement.

Evaluation Focus

This evaluation framework involves both formative (process) and summative (outcome) evaluation activities. Evaluation questions will examine both:

- How is the program working? and
- What has been the impact on the participants?

To address evaluation objectives, data was collected from

- Project Coordinators.
- Students.
- Teachers.
- Mentors.

Challenges and factors specific to each site were be identified. Some key evaluation questions for each group are outlined below:

Key Evaluation Questions for Project Coordinators

- What was originally proposed and intended with regard to project implementation?
- How well did the training help to implement the Connecting to Success project?
- What's working as expected? What challenges and barriers have emerged?
- How has staff responded to the challenges and barriers?

- Do school, teachers, and students "buy into" the Connecting to Success project? Why or why not?
- What recommendations do project coordinators have to improve Connecting to Success activities in the future?

Key Evaluation Questions for Students

- What do student participants like and dislike about the Connecting to Success process?
- What are their experiences? Did students accomplish their goals?
- Do students "buy into" the Connecting to Success project?
- What recommendations do students have to improve the Connecting to Success project in the future?
- How has participation in Connecting to Success changed students' outlook about their future?

Key Evaluation Questions for Teachers

- How well did the training help teachers to conduct Connecting to Success activities?
- What's working as expected? What challenges and barriers have emerged?
- How have staff responded to the challenges and barriers?
- What do teachers who are involved in the Connecting to Success project actually do? What are their experiences?
- Were students with e-mentors more motivated in school?
- What do teachers like and dislike about the Connecting to Success process?
- What are their perceptions of what's working and what's not working?
- Do teachers "buy into" the Connecting to Success project?

Why or why not?

- What are teacher's perceptions of student participants?

Key Evaluation Questions for Mentors

- How well did the training support your participation in the project?
- What did you like about the project?
- What could be improved?
- What did you learn from participating in this project?

- How has your attitude changed about students with disabilities through participation in this program?
- Would you participate in Connecting to Success again? Why or why not?

Data Collection and Analysis

The information required for this evaluation involved data that was sufficient to address each component described in the Evaluation Focus section. Data was collected from local program coordinators, mentors, teachers and students. Students were given both pre- and post-project surveys; mentors, teachers and local program coordinators were surveyed at trainings and at the conclusion of the project. Surveys were electronically administered whenever possible. Survey results were coded and entered into a database for data analysis using descriptive and cross-tabulation analyses. Conducting semi-structured interviews with local program coordinators at regular intervals during the project and at the conclusion provided more detailed information about the program. In all of the data collection process, participant involvement in evaluation activities was voluntary and their responses remained confidential.

Baseline Data

In order to measure progress towards intended goals and outcomes the following baseline data needed to be collected:

- Gender.
- Ethnicity.
- Age.
- Type of Disability.
- Grades/Grade Point Average (last year).
- Attendance Record.
- Previous Participation in a Mentoring Program.

Reporting Evaluation Results

An evaluation report will be developed and distributed to all targeted audiences. The report will be designed to:

- Inform intended audiences about the Connecting to Success project and what was learned from implementing project activities, and
- Inform potential users interested in replication and/or adaptation of the Connecting to Success e-mentoring project.

Specific Goals For All Sites

Goal:

- Students will demonstrate increase in self-esteem.
- Students will demonstrate increase in writing/reading skills.

How measured:

- Students given pre and post self-esteem survey.
- Grade comparison.

Instrument:

- Self-esteem survey.
- Baseline and end of project data.

Assumptions

- Relationship with caring adult leads to better academic performance.
- Participation in e-mentoring program will impact student's career awareness.
- Participation in project will improve student's writing/reading skills.
- Adults participating in project will benefit from making a difference in students lives and learning about issues of students with disabilities.

Section 12

Pilot Project Partners

National Center on Secondary Education and Transition

The National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET) is a collaborative effort between the Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota; Center on Disability Studies, National Center on the Study of Post-Secondary Educational Supports at the University of Hawaii; TransCen, Inc. of Rockville, Maryland; Institute for Educational Leadership, Center for Workforce Development, Washington DC; PACER Center of Minnesota; and National Association of State Directors of Special Education. Youth with disabilities and families are engaged at all levels of the project to ensure that they have a voice and direct role in setting the direction for the Center.

Mission

NCSET's goals specifically focus on youth with disabilities and families, policymakers, professionals at all levels, and the service delivery system as a whole. The primary goals are to:

- Ensure all students with disabilities, including those with significant needs, have access to the full range of learning experiences in the general education curriculum.
- Empower students and families to participate at all levels of secondary education and transition.
- Ensure students' access to and full participation in post-secondary education, employment, and independent living opportunities.
- Strengthen state and local capacity to effectively improve secondary education and transition policies and practices.
- Improve collaboration and system linkages at all levels.

NCSET has established four Technical Assistance (TA) Networks to plan and support the delivery of technical assistance and information dissemination.

TA Networks address specific areas of national significance and include:

- Secondary Education Assessment and Curriculum Network
- Postschool Outcomes/Results Network
- Student and Family Participation Network
- Systems Linkages and Services Coordination Network.

In addition, NCSET leverages the existing capacity of other researchers, technical assistance providers, and dissemination centers (e.g., RRCs, other OSEP technical assistance and dissemination centers, RRTCs, UAPs, clearinghouses, IDEA Partner Projects, and others) in organizing and providing technical assistance and disseminating information.

The center responds to technical assistance and information needs of six major audiences:

- State-level education reform and systems change initiatives.
- Local education agencies and community-based programs.
- Workforce development agencies and initiatives.
- Youth with disabilities and families.
- A national network of technical assistance and dissemination providers.
- Federal agencies and national organizations.

Reason for Involvement in this Project

NCSET led the establishment of Connecting to Success out of a desire to bridge the "digital divide" and make innovative learning opportunities available to youth with disabilities. Although many e-mentoring projects exist throughout the United States, few have focused specifically on serving students with disabilities. This project represents an exciting opportunity to improve transition processes for youth.

Role in Connecting to Success

NCSET serves as the coordinating entity for the project, working in partnership with Achieve!Minneapolis. NCSET provides expertise on issues pertinent to the transition process and youth with disabilities.

Contact Information:

MARY MACK, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR
NATIONAL CENTER ON SECONDARY EDUCATION AND TRANSITION
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
6 PATTEE HALL, 150 PILLSBURY DRIVE SE, MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55455
612-624-7579 MACKX012@UMN.EDU

Achieve!Minneapolis

The Youth Trust became Achieve!Minneapolis in March, 2002.

Established in 1989, Youth Trust was created to build and enhance the linkage between the business community and the Minneapolis Public Schools. The aim was to build a stronger, better-educated student body and better prepared workforce. With the leadership of the city's Mayor, the School Superintendent and Business Community, Youth Trust developed an "intermediary relationship" creating and serving a multitude of partnerships between employers and schools, classrooms and teachers. In 2002, two proven organizations have united in an effort to engage more citizens, businesses and community groups with the schools. Youth Trust and the Minneapolis Public Schools Foundation have joined forces to form Achieve!Minneapolis, a new 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Achieve!Minneapolis will have the size and scope to more effectively serve the needs of students from the Minneapolis Public Schools.

Mission

Achieve!Minneapolis now builds and serves partnerships and establishes programs in Minneapolis and in other selected locations. Its mission is to galvanize community resources to help all Minneapolis public school students succeed in school and become productive citizens.

Reason for Involvement in this Project

One of Achieve!Minneapolis' most innovative tools is it's e-mentoring program. Recognized nationwide as one of the first, and leading, mentoring programs to develop a curriculum-based, "adopt a classroom model," it uses email technology to connect students with caring adults and increase their writing skills, while teaching marketable skills. On November 16, 2000, Youth Trust's Cargill/Olson E-Mentoring Program was one of seven projects to be recognized by the SBC Foundation for innovative use of technology in partnerships. The award was given during an Awards Luncheon at the National Partners In Education Conference in Houston.

Role of Connecting to Success

As e-mentoring is the centerpiece of Connecting to Success, Achieve!Minneapolis was invited to provide consultative and training assistance in establishing models in rural and urban communities in Minnesota and Iowa. Achieve!Minneapolis will be equally interested in learning how to best apply e-mentoring to serve transition students in various capacities. The importance of connecting a working/caring adult with a challenged youth through the continuous exchange of communication by email will provide a number of positive outcomes. They include:
a student who feels more connected, a student who learns to write in a more organized manner and with increased proficiency in spelling, and a student who learns more about basic and marketable skills. The skills gained will benefit students in post-secondary education as well as their careers.

Other Projects We Are Involved In

- Workplace Tutoring—a year long project bringing students to the workplace to meet with and be tutored by employees there. Students increase their basic skills while being introduced to the "world of work environment."
- Jobs Skills Fairs—a special project providing students with the opportunity to be interviewed by potential employers in a realistic interview format.
- Business Goes To School—an annual collaboration with the Minneapolis Public Schools and the Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce to have business and community leaders spend a number of hours in selected schools, serving elementary, middle and high schools, giving them an opportunity to observe, discuss and interact with students, educators and administrators.

Contact Information:

CATHERINE JORDAN,
CEO & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
ARETHA GREEN-RUPERT, PROGRAM DIRECTOR
JESSICA ROGERS, PROGRAM MANAGER
111 THIRD AVE S., SUITE 120 MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55401
PHONE:612-455-1564 FAX:612-455-1531

For further information about Achieve!Minneapolis, you may visit the website at www.achieveminneapolis.org.

Minnesota Transition Team

By bringing together under one roof all education and other programs that address family breakdown, violence, and poverty, the department strives to make services easier to access. The department models at the state level local "one-stop shops" where educational services are located with other community resources. By integrating programs at the state level, the department encourages state professional and social services entities to work together to meet the needs of Minnesota's children and families. The Minnesota Transition Team meets on a monthly basis to coordinate, collaborate and provide training to local partners. Our partners include representation from parents, students, career and technical education, Department of Economic Security, non-profit community partners, school-to-work partnerships, MnSCU, PACER Center, Department of Human Services, Department of Corrections, Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, Department of Children, Families & Learning, and the business community.

Mission

Our mission is to create a statewide system of education and employment opportunities that will enable youth with disabilities to attain the skills and knowledge required in the workplace of today and tomorrow, and to transition smoothly from secondary education to adult life. The Minnesota Interagency Office on Transition Services is committed to educating youth with disabilities so that they may experience a coordinated transition from adult life. Transitioning students with disabilities can be achieved through effective interagency collaboration and comprehensive individualized planning. It is their partnership between agencies, families, communities, and individuals that can make successful transitions to adult life.

Reason for Involvement in this Project

The Minnesota Transition Team believes that the e-mentoring project will enhance the educational and social/emotional growth of transition-aged youth with disabilities and welcomes the collaborative venture.

Role in Connecting to Success

The Minnesota Transition Team in collaboration with Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning has acted as a facilitator to identify local communities willing to develop and test a model for e-Mentoring in Minnesota. At this point two local communities are receiving support to develop policies, procedures and support/learning material. The Minnesota Transition Team will also assist in the development of a method of evaluation.

For further information about Minnesota Transition Team, you may visit the website at http://cfl.state.mn.us/SPECED.

Contact Information:

JAYNE SPAIN, COORDINATOR
MN TRANSITION TEAM
MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES & LEARNING
1500 HIGHWAY 36 WEST
ROSEVILLE, MN 55113
PHONE: 651-582-8200

Iowa Paths

Iowa Paths is a federally funded systems change project working to expand employment opportunities to individuals with disabilities. This project is a cooperative effort between the Iowa Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Departments of Education, Human Services, Workforce Development and Human Rights.

Mission

Iowa Paths is based on the theory that where local effective teamwork develops, the agency partners will have not only a better knowledge of services, but will also develop and strengthen professional relationships with their counterparts in other agencies to more effectively confront systems barriers. The overall goals of the project are:

- To identify and reduce organizational barriers to competitive employment for targeted individuals with disabilities on public support through state-level interagency collaboration.
- To identify and improve practices and processes for referring individuals with disabilities to various services in order to improve service delivery, tracking of client referrals and employment outcomes.
- To engage employers in providing employment opportunities to individuals through market-driven job development.

Reason for Involvement in this Project

Iowa Paths is working to identify barriers and to implement changes that will improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. In the early stages of this project consumer focus groups were held throughout the state to identify such barriers. One key barrier identified by consumers relates to the issue of self-confidence and a lack of a support system. We believe one strategy that could help to address this barrier is the creation of a statewide mentoring program. Through this program consumers with disabilities could draw helpful insights from professionals about job seeking, networking and job-keeping skills.

Role in Connecting to Success

The Iowa Paths Systems Change Project in collaboration with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, School-to-Work, Iowa Workforce Development and Area Education Agencies has acted as a facilitator to identify local communities willing to develop and test a model for e-mentoring in Iowa. At this point two local communities are receiving support to develop policies, procedures and support/learning material. Iowa Paths will also assist in the development of a method of evaluation.

Contact Information:

BARBARA MCCLANNAHAN, PROJECT MANAGER
IOWA PATHS SYSTEMS CHANGE PROJECT
510 E. 12TH STREET
DES MOINES, IOWA 50319
PHONE: 515-281-0264 FAX: 515-281-4150
EMAIL: BMCCLANNAHAN@DVRS.STATE.IA.US

Presidential Task Force on the Employment of Adults with Disabilities

The Task Force was formed by Executive Order 13078 in 1998. The mandate of the Task Force was to evaluate existing Federal programs to determine what changes, modifications, and innovations may be necessary to remove barriers to employment opportunities faced by adults with disabilities. Some of the areas the Task Force reviewed include: reasonable accommodations, inadequate access to health care, lack of consumer-driven, long-term supports and services, transportation, accessible and integrated housing, telecommunications, assistive technology, community services, child care, education, vocational rehabilitation, training services, employment retention, promotion and discrimination, on-the-job supports, and economic incentives to work.

Mission

The Task Force mission was to create a coordinated and aggressive national policy to bring adults with disabilities into gainful employment at a rate that is as close as possible to that of the general adult population.

Reason for Involvement in this Project

The Task Force perceives mentoring as a powerful agent for change among persons with disabilities. By supporting Connecting to SUCCESS, the Task Force is taking a pro-active role in promoting research regarding a cutting-edge form of mentoring that has the potential to reach thousands of youth with disabilities nationwide. Not only does this project engage youth in mentoring relationships with caring adults, but it bridges the digital divide, making technology more accessible to students with disabilities.

Role in Connecting to Success

The Task Force was the primary financial supporter of the project and also provided program guidance. In 2002, the Task Force ended and the work of the Task Force was folded into the newly created Office of Disability Policy, US Department of Labor. When the Presidential Task Force for the Employment of Adults with disabilities ended ODEP assumed responsibility for the management of the Connecting to Success grant.

Office of Disability Employment Policy

In the FY2001 Department of Labor appropriation, Congress approved an Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) to be headed by an Assistant Secretary. ODEP's mission is to provide leadership to increase employment opportunities for adults and youth with disabilities. ODEP is a federal agency in the Department of Labor. Its customers include:

- Individuals with disabilities and their families.
- Private employers and their employees.
- Federal, state, and local government agencies.
- Educational and training institutions.
- Disability advocates.
- Providers of services and government employers.

Vision

The Office of Disability Employment Policy will provide the national leadership to increase employment opportunities for adults and youth with disabilities while striving to eliminate barriers to employment. ODEP will support the creation of expanded work options and meaningful employment, promote economic opportunities and independence, encourage self-determination, and support inclusion of people with disabilities in their communities.

The New Freedom Initiative

On February 1, 2001, President George W. Bush announced the New Freedom Initiative. Founded upon the spirit of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the New Freedom Initiative represents a comprehensive set of proposals designed to ensure that Americans with disabilities have the opportunity to learn and develop skills, engage in productive work, make choices about their daily lives, and participate fully in their communities. The Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) is uniquely charged with providing a national focus on enhancing the employment of people with disabilities. As such, ODEP has the key responsibility for implementing the employment-related aspects of the President's New Freedom Initiative.

Contact information:

Richard Horne, Ph.D., Senior Policy Analyst
Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor
Frances Perkins Building, 200 Constitution Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20210
Phone: 202-693-4923 Email: horne-richard@dol.gov.

Section 13

Worksheets and Model Forms

Sample Mentor Recruiting Memo

To: All Employees

From: Mary Davis, Human Resources Coordinator, Ace Software

Date: 8/31/03

Subject: Opportunity to participate in e-mentoring project

We are seeking company employees who would be interested in offering academic and career support while serving as an adult role model via email to students with disabilities at South High School. The students, age 14-15, have mild to moderate cognitive impairments, and all have the potential for productive employment as adults. This e-mentoring project is designed to help them develop some of the employment-related skills they will need in order to pursue their dreams.

E-mentoring has been taking hold at other companies throughout the country and having a positive impact on students in terms of their grades, self-esteem and attitudes. You would be amazed at the positive impact that one email a week can have on a student. E-mentors from Ace Software will be matched with students for weekly email exchanges and two school-sponsored gatherings.

E-mentoring is a fun way for employees to make a positive difference in students' lives. It is also a way for our company to build positive relationships with the community and support the development of the future work force. If you are interested in becoming an e-mentor or would like further information, please contact Mary Davisson at: mdavisson@email.com.

Sample of Second Mentor Recruiting Memo

Thank you for your interest in the Connecting to Success e-mentoring project. The following is some addition information about the goals of project, plus an application form. Please fill out the form and return it to: Mary Davis, Human Resources Coordinator, E399, mdavisson@email.com

Through this e-mentoring project, we seek to improve outcomes for youth with disabilities at South High School by:

- Connecting youth to positive role models in the world of work who understand their special needs.
- Building motivation for academic learning.
- Enhancing self esteem.
- Improving skills in writing, computers, and social interaction.

What the project will ask of e-mentors is:

- An interest in helping a student learn and grow.
- Openness to learning about disabilities.
- A willingness to support the goals of the project.

A one-year commitment to participate in:

- 3-hours of initial orientation and training.
- 30-45 minutes per week online.
- 2-3 face-to-face meetings per year with students.

Suggestions for Mentor Application

The purpose of this application is to help to match you with a student who has similar interests and aspirations.

What are your favorite things to do in your free time? (ie. sports, spending time with friends, art, shopping, spending time with family, playing an instrument.)

Name: _____ Division: _____ Gender: F M

Mail Station: _____ Building: _____

Telephone: _____ Email address: _____

Languages (other than English, including American Sign Language): _____

_____

Why do you want to be an e-mentor? _____

_____

Please describe your educational background including the highest degree you have received and any areas in which you have majored or specialized.

_____

Please describe your employment background, including your current position. _____

_____

_____

Please describe your volunteer experience. _____

_____

Please describe any experience that you have in working with young people. _____

_____

_____

Have you had any experiences that would help you to understand the needs of youth with disabilities? If so please describe briefly. _____

_____

What are your hobbies? _____

What were your favorite subjects in school? _____

Do you have any special skills or talents that you would like to share with a young person?

_____

_____

Mentor/Mentee Activities and Preferences

Name _____ Date _____

Directions Check the activities in which you participate or are interested.

Sports

- ❑ Archery
- ❑ Auto Racing
- ❑ Baseball
- ❑ Basketball
- ❑ Billiards
- ❑ Bowling
- ❑ Football
- ❑ Frisbee
- ❑ Golf
- ❑ Mini Golf
- ❑ Hockey
- ❑ Kick Boxing
- ❑ Martial Arts
- ❑ Motocross
- ❑ Ping Pong
- ❑ Racketball
- ❑ Rollerblading
- ❑ Soccer
- ❑ Swimming/ Diving
- ❑ Tennis
- ❑ Track
- ❑ Volleyball
- ❑ Weight-lifting
- ❑ Body Building Wrestling

_____

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_____

Outdoor Activities

- ❑ Animal Tending
- ❑ Aviation
- ❑ Bicycling
- ❑ Boating
- ❑ Camping
- ❑ Canoeing
- ❑ Cross-country Skiing
- ❑ Downhill Skiing
- ❑ Fishing
- ❑ Gardening
- ❑ Hiking
- ❑ Horseback Riding
- ❑ Hunting
- ❑ Ice Boating
- ❑ Ice Fishing
- ❑ Ice Skating
- ❑ Jogging/ Running
- ❑ Motorcycling
- ❑ Nature Study
- ❑ Picnicking
- ❑ Rock Climbing
- ❑ Rodeos
- ❑ Snowmobiling
- ❑ Walking
- ❑ Water Skiing

_____

_____

Indoor Activities

- ❑ Acting
- ❑ Astronomy
- ❑ Coin Collecting
- ❑ Concerts
- ❑ Cooking
- ❑ Dancing
- ❑ Indoor Games
- ❑ Movies
- ❑ Museums
- ❑ Musical Instruments
- ❑ Plays/Theater
- ❑ Reading
- ❑ Rock Collecting
- ❑ Science
- ❑ Singing
- ❑ Stamp Collecting
- ❑ Television
- ❑ Video Games
- ❑ Writing Poetry
- ❑ Writing Stories

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Hobbies

- ❑ Arts and Crafts
- ❑ Auto Mechanics
- ❑ Carving
- ❑ Computers
- ❑ Crocheting
- ❑ Electronics
- ❑ Go-Carts
- ❑ Jewelry Making
- ❑ Knitting
- ❑ Macrame
- ❑ Model Making
- ❑ Painting
- ❑ Photography
- ❑ Sewing
- ❑ Soapbox
- ❑ Woodworking

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Sample Student Application for an E-Mentor

Name:_____Age:_____

School: _____Circle grade: 9th 10th 11th 12th

List classes you are currently taking:_____

_____

_____

What are your favorite subjects in school? _____

_____

_____

List three careers that interest you: _____

_____

_____

List any jobs or volunteer experiences that you have had:_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Sample Parental Letter and Release Request

Dear Parent/Guardian;

We are thrilled to announce a newly formed partnership between Jordan Middle School and The Gillen Company. Our partnership is ready to implement a new program called "E-Mentoring." The program is approved by school administration and by the Gillen Company. It is an exciting way for students to receive one-on-one mentoring with an employee from our business community. Your child is in a class selected to participate in this program.

E-mentoring promises to bring classroom learning together with application in the real world of work. E-mentoring gives students real-life experience and a purpose for expressing themselves. It also provides the opportunity for students to practice keyboarding, punctuation and spelling skills, learn about responsible use of technology while introduces students to other caring adults who offer not only academic encouragement, but also career information, attitudes and skills- all done over the Internet.

As a participant in the program, your son/daughter will be matched with an employee at the Gillen Company and exchange weekly email as part of classroom work. The class will also have one or two opportunities to visit the work site and to host the employees at our school. In the exchange of emails, both student and mentor are encouraged to discuss school learning, homework, career interests and other interests. Some classroom assignments will be designed around the email exchanges. All meetings between students and mentors will be supervised and emails will be monitored by the teacher.

We are set to begin the E-Mentoring program in early October and end the program in May.

We are asking three things from you:

1 Complete and return the permission slip for your son/daughter's participation.

2 Encourage your child to be an active participant.

3 Ask your child to tell you about his/her experience with E-Mentoring.

If you have any questions, please contact Ms. David, Jordan Middle School at 612-423-5444.

Thank you!

I give my son/daughter, _____, permission to have a Gillen Company E-Mentor and to go on field trips and other planned activities of the program.

Parent/guardian signature _____

Section 14

References and Resources

On-Line Resources

There are many, many resources available on the Internet. Here is a list to get you started. It is not exhaustive, and should be used as a jumping off point, rather then a final destination.

Disability Service Organizations

Autism
www.autism-society.org

Brain Injury
www.biausa.org

Children and Adults with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
www.chadd.org

Down Syndrome
www.nas.com/downsyn

Easter Seals
www.easter-seals.org

Goodwill
www.goodwill.org

Institute on Community Integration (ICI), University of Minnesota
http://ici.umn.edu/

National Attention Deficit Disorder
www.add.org

National Center for Learning Disabilities
http://www.ncld.org/

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities
http://www.nichcy.org

National Parent Network on Disabilities (NPND)
http://www.npnd.org/

Special Education Resources on the Internet
www.seri.net

Visual Impairments
www.afb.org

Transition and School-to-Work

Jobs for the Future
http://www.jff.org/

National Center on Secondary Education and Transition
http://ici.umn.edu/ncset

United States Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration
http://www.doleta.gov/

Americans with Disabilities Act Regional Technical Assistance Center

www.ada.gov

Job Accommodations Network
www.jan.wvu.edu

Technology-Related Assistance

Assistive Technology
www.abledata.com

Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic
www.rfb.org

Mentoring

National Mentoring Partnership
www.mentoring.org

Disability Mentoring Day
www.aapd-dc.org/mentor.html

Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America
www.bbbsa.org

Public/Private Ventures
www.ppv.org

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E-Mentoring Program

Mentor Guide to Encouraging Workplace Skills

One of the objectives of the e-Mentoring programs is to help students "understand the workplace and gain skills necessary for success."

Mentors take the lead in meeting this objective. During the course of the year through email correspondence and in conversations during site visits, mentors ask questions, share ideas and discuss the "skills" listed below. These marketable skills are "hard and soft" skills, behaviors and attitudes necessary to succeed in school and in the workplace. When possible, try to help students see the relationship between their life in school and how these same skills are applied in the workplace. Have fun and be creative in your approach.

After your initial emails, begin interjecting the workplace skill suggestions below into your correspondence with the student. This will help direct a portion of your regular emails. Try focusing on a new skill emphasis each month or move on to another skill once you think your student begins to understand the concept/relationship.

Skills that emphasize using resources

- Attendance and punctuality. Talk about the importance of coming to work/school every day. Discuss what happens when you are absent. What do you miss? What happens when you get behind? How could missing impact pay/grades? Ask student to tell you the school's attendance policies (rules). Ask your student how often he/she misses and why. Do they let teachers know they are gone? Why is this important?
- Managing time. See if your student can tell you how many hours they spend at school doing school work, attending classes, eating lunch, and hanging with friends. Or, trying another approach, how many hours each day do you "listen and learn." have fun and learn, hang with friends, work on assignments, think about other things than school. Share how much time you spend on each of the items. Discuss the importance of managing time, using calendars, setting priorities. Talk about other things you do with your time during a 24 hour day.

Skills that emphasize interpersonal skills

- Positive attitude. Ask student to describe someone with a positive attitude. Are those similar to positive attitudes in the workplace? Why is attitude important in the workplace? What happens if your boss, co-workers and customers think you have a bad attitude? What happens to students when teachers, other students, and visitors to the school think a student has a bad attitude? How do you show a good attitude (e.g., participate in class/meetings; complete assignments/commitments; not tearing down others so you look good)?
- Team work. Ask about teams your student is or was on. Help them see how working with others in an assigned class project is like a team. Discuss how your job often requires working in a team and, like many teams, you don't always choose who you work with. Help student see that completing projects requires many skills and needs people with different kinds of skills. What skills does your student think he/she has? Emphasize that sometimes you don't always like a person on your team, but you do respect them and find ways to work together to get a task done.
- Getting along with others. Ask your student if he/she can make a list of reasons why you need to get along with others at work or at school. Ask them for a definition of respect. Why is it important? How do you show respect... to your friends, other people at school, to teachers, to the principal...to your co-workers, to your boss, to your CEO? What happens if you don't...at school...at work? Try creating a list of ways to show respect and get along with others. See how long your list can get.

SKILLS THAT EMPHASIZE USING INFORMATION

- Problem solving. How do you solve a problem? Identify some of the problems you have to solve at work. Ask the student to identify some school problems. How do you decide what to do? Break a big problem into small pieces? Look at what you know and what you don't know about the problem? Where do you get help in order to make a good decision—asking other people, the Internet, reading, the library? What are the consequences of different decisions? Identify a "problem" and see if you and your student can come up with a good solution. Then, go back and look at the steps you used to solve it.
- Being creative/learning to do new things. Look for better ways to do assignments or some tasks at work. Why is it important to be able to do this at work? At school? Where can you find information to get new ideas? Brainstorm ways your student might present information in an assignment in a new or different way. Ask you student for advice on how you might complete a work task differently from the way you usually do it. Have fun brainstorming a list. Discuss different ways a person can learn something new/do something in a new way without looking "dumb." Mentor gives examples how they asked questions, read, etc. to learn something at work they didn't know how to do.

SKILLS THAT EMPHASIZE USING SYSTEMS

- Understanding current events. Discuss with your student how something that happens in another part of the country or world effects you or your business. Pick a current event (e.g., an education decision to require longer school days, a disease affecting grain fields in North Dakota, etc.). Explore how this event impacts you, your business, the student. Why is it important to know about current events? Can you do anything to change a situation?

SKILLS THAT EMPHASIZE USING TECHNOLOGY

- Using computer skills. Ask students to tell you about all the different way they use computers for school, fun, etc. Share how you use a computer at work. Let them know how your use of the computer today is different than when you started your job. How did you learn to do things differently? See if the student can share some examples of their skill at using different computer functions...like a spell check, sending an attachment.

The Power of Assets

On one level, the 40 developmental assets represent everyday wisdom about positive experiences and characteristics for young people. In addition, Search Institute research has found that these assets are powerful influences on adolescent behavior—both protecting young people from many different problem behaviors and promoting positive attitudes and behaviors. This power is evident across all cultural and socioeconomic groups of youth. There is also evidence from other research that assets have the same kind of power for younger children.

Protecting Youth from High-Risk Behaviors

Assets have tremendous power to protect youth from many different harmful or unhealthy choices. To illustrate this power, these charts show that youth with the most assets are least likely to engage in four different patterns of high-risk behavior, based on surveys of almost 100,000 6th- to 12th-grade youth in 213 towns and cities in the United States during the 1996-97 school year.

	0–10 Assets	11–20 Assets	21–30 Assets	31–40 Assets
Problem Alcohol Use	53%	30%	11%	3%
Illicit Drug Use	42%	19%	6%	1%
Sexual Activity	33%	21%	10%	3%
Violence	61%	35%	16%	6%

The same kind of impact is evident with many other problem behaviors, including tobacco use, depression and attempted suicide, antisocial behavior, school problems, driving and alcohol, and gambling.

Promoting Positive Attitudes and Behaviors

In addition to protecting youth from negative behaviors, having more assets increases the chances that young people will have positive attitudes and behaviors, as these charts show.

	0–10 Assets	11–20 Assets	21–30 Assets	31–40 Assets
Succeeds in School	7%	19%	35%	53%
Values Diversity	34%	53%	69%	87%
Maintains Good Health	25%	46%	69%	88%
Delays Gratification	27%	42%	56%	72%

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Search INSTITUTE — Practical research benefiting children and youth

40 Developmental Assets

Search Institute has identified the following building blocks of healthy development that help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES HEALTHY YOUTH

	Category	Asset Name and Definition
External Assets	Support	1. **Family Support**-Family life provides high levels of love and support. 2. **Positive Family Communication**-Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents. 3. **Other Adult Relationships**-Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults. 4. **Caring Neighborhood**-Young person experiences caring neighbors. 5. **Caring School Climate**-School provides a caring, encouraging environment. 6. **Parent Involvement in Schooling**-Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.
	Empowerment	7. **Community Values Youth**-Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth. 8. **Youth as Resources**-Young people are given useful roles in the community. 9. **Service to Others**-Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week. 10. **Safety**-Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood.
	Boundaries & Expectations	11. **Family Boundaries**-Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts. 12. **School Boundaries**-School provides clear rules and consequences. 13. **Neighborhood Boundaries**-Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior. 14. **Adult Role Models**-Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior. 15. **Positive Peer Influence**-Young person's best friends model responsible behavior. 16. **High Expectations**-Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.
	Constructive Use of Time	17. **Creative Activities**-Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts. 18. **Youth Programs**-Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in the community. 19. **Religious Community**-Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution. 20. **Time at Home**-Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.
Internal Assets	Commitment to Learning	21. **Achievement Motivation**-Young person is motivated to do well in school. 22. **School Engagement**-Young person is actively engaged in learning. 23. **Homework**-Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day. 24. **Bonding to School**-Young person cares about her or his school. 25. **Reading for Pleasure**-Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.
	Positive Values	26. **Caring**-Young person places high value on helping other people. 27. **Equality and Social Justice**-Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty. 28. **Integrity**-Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs. 29. **Honesty**-Young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy." 30. **Responsibility**-Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility. 31. **Restraint**-Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.
	Social Competencies	32. **Planning and Decision Making**-Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices. 33. **Interpersonal Competence**-Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills. 34. **Cultural Competence**-Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds. 35. **Resistance Skills**-Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations. 36. **Peaceful Conflict Resolution**-Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.
	Positive Identity	37. **Personal Power**-Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me." 38. **Self-Esteem**-Young person reports having a high self-esteem. 39. **Sense of Purpose**-Young person reports that "my life has a purpose." 40. **Positive View of Personal Future**-Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future

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